

Biddulph High School

Conway Road, Knypersley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST8 7AR

Inspection dates 9–10 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- An ethos of service and responsibility among students has created a school community that is both caring and harmonious.
- Overall standards at Key Stage 4 have been consistently above the national average for the last three years.
- Standards and progress in English at Key Stage 4 are particularly high.
- The sixth form is good because students are making good progress given their starting points.
- Sixth form students make particularly good progress on practical and vocational courses.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary and they have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe.
- In lessons teachers make good use of physically active work in groups and pairs to engage students and to encourage them to work independently.
- In lessons students show excellent attitudes to their learning and there is exceptional support and care for vulnerable students and for those with behavioural difficulties.
Over the last three years gaps in the standard reached by the most disadvantaged students and others have been closing.
- The actions of a team of experienced and effective senior leaders have had a very positive impact on the quality of teaching in this improving school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is good rather than outstanding because not all lessons, including those in the sixth form, provide a variety of different activities and tasks, particularly those designed to challenge the most able.
- Not all the courses that students follow in the sixth form are always best suited to their needs
- The school does not have a fully developed and consistent marking policy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons. Seven were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with the principal, staff and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors spoke to students in lessons, at break and during lunchtimes. They also spoke formally to three groups of students on the first day of the inspection.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's plans for the future and ongoing reviews of those plans, and the school's records of their observations of teaching. They also took note of the school's records of the progress that students are making.
- The inspectors looked at behaviour logs and the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspectors took account of 51 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 40 responses to the staff inspection survey.
- Inspectors heard a group of students read on the first day of inspection and listened to students reading in lessons.

Inspection team

Richard Boswell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Judith Gooding	Additional Inspector
Rena Saggiu	Additional Inspector
William Cassell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Biddulph High School Academy converted to become an academy on Thursday 1 September 2011. When its predecessor school, Biddulph High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is smaller than the average secondary school.
- Since September 2012 the school has had an interim principal. A new principal has been appointed to start in September 2013.
- The vast majority of students come from White British backgrounds and the proportion of students identified as speaking English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The percentage of students who are eligible for pupil premium (which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and students with families in the armed services) is below average.
- The proportion of students registered as disabled or with a statement of special educational needs or being supported at 'school action plus' is average, while the number of students supported at 'school action' is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move the quality of teaching from good to outstanding and so raise achievement further by
 - providing and adapting activities and tasks that support the best learning for all groups and individuals and give appropriate challenge for the most able, including in the sixth form.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by
 - refining the school's marking policy and ensuring its consistent use across subject areas and key stages so that students are always clear what they need to do to improve.
 - giving careful consideration to the performance of students in examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 and ensuring that they all follow the vocational and academic courses most suited to their needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students are starting school in Year 9 with levels of achievement that are broadly similar to those found nationally and an increasing number with levels below this. They end Year 11 with overall results that are above the national average and this represents good progress over time. Most students do better than predicted from their Key Stage 2 results.
- Significantly more students in Key Stage 4 exceed the expected levels of progress in English than found nationally. In mathematics the proportion making expected progress is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of students at Biddulph High School that achieve at least five good grades at GCSE including English and mathematics has been above average for the past three years. In 2012, in addition to English, students performed particularly well in art and design and in design technology, achieving significantly more higher grades in these subjects than in their respective national averages.
- In the sixth form, the percentage of students achieving a pass grade at A level is in line with the national average while students taking the more practical Applied A and AS levels and BTEC examinations are achieving above this. The school has recognised that the proportion of students achieving a pass at AS level and achieving top grades at AS and A level has been below those found nationally. As a result the school has put in place much greater support and monitoring for existing sixth form students and for those moving from Year 11 to Year 12. The school's own information and tracking of students' progress now shows clear and significant improvements in achievement this year, particularly in reaching the higher grades.
- Where the standards and progress of students in the sixth form are still not as good as they could be it is because some students are following courses to which they are not always best suited. The better performance of a small proportion of sixth formers in the more practical Applied A levels demonstrates that this may be a more appropriate route for some students.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium are, from their starting points, making progress that is similar to others in the school. The pupil premium funding has been used to create smaller English and mathematics classes giving teachers more time to support individual students and to allow for one-to-one sessions. In addition, literacy has been aided by the use of portable, electronic media and aspirations have been raised by visits to universities and providing access to a 'Learning to Learn' programme of study skills. There is convincing evidence that the gap between these students and others in the school has closed in the last year by six months in mathematics and by four months in English.
- Students on school action and those with statements who have special educational needs make better than average progress as a result of effective support in lessons and individual or small group teaching. Other students with special educational needs make progress that is in line with national averages. Last year all students on school action plus continued into employment or further education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching is having a strong impact on raising students' expectations of themselves and building self-confidence, particularly with the most vulnerable.

- Teachers frequently make the most of opportunities to add energy and pace to a lesson by encouraging students to be out of their chairs and conducting practical experiments, engaging in role-play or negotiating and collaborating in teams. This was seen in a dynamic Year 10 lesson in urban dance; a restaurant scenario played out in Year 9 German; thought-provoking research and moral debate from a Year 9 history lesson on the rise of the Nazi party; use of a Year 11 classroom 'washing line' to peg up ideas on the establishment of the NHS; Year 12 Biology groups comparing each other's notes on the heart and the circulation of blood.
- Many lessons make references to real life situations and to learning beyond school. This allows students to see the relevance of their studies to employment, education and training and in 2012 the overwhelming majority of students continued into one of these avenues.
- In the best lessons, teachers are providing a variety of activities and tasks that suit the needs and interests of different groups of learners. However, this is not yet consistent practice in all lessons, including in the sixth form. Too frequently teachers give the same work to all learners, including the most able. They are only offered a greater challenge at a later stage in the lesson and this means they do not always make as much progress as they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Evidence from inspection activities and from the school's own monitoring show that students have very positive attitudes to their learning. This is partly as a result of the strong relationships between students and teachers, founded on trust and mutual respect. Students spoke highly of their teachers and commented on their commitment and their knowledge of their students.
- In addition to the excellent behaviour seen and recorded in lessons and around the school, the students are offered many and varied opportunities to work independently, taking responsibility for themselves and for others. This is why the behaviour and safety of pupils have been judged to be outstanding. For example, over 150 students from Year 9 to Year 11 have a full year's placement as dance and sports leaders, working with younger children in first and middle schools. In addition, each year sixth form students act as literacy and numeracy leaders working with students in Year 9 and Year 10 in ten week placements. Over 70 students are elected by their peers to the school council or serve as leaders in their school houses.
- The small number of students who have behavioural difficulties in lessons are very well managed and supported in the school's 'Personalised Learning Centre' and 'Flexible Learning Centre'. These are focused on ensuring students continue to have access to educational opportunities such as work-related courses and where possible to re-integrate them back into the classroom. As a result, there was no disruptive behaviour seen in lessons in the course of the inspection and school records show it very rarely occurs.
- An analysis of records of behaviour over time combined with discussions with students, parental and staff views and observation of behaviour during the inspection all overwhelmingly show students who are courteous and respectful of staff and each other. Students spoke to inspectors with maturity and conviction about staying safe both in their community and in the virtual world of the internet. They were well-informed about how to respond to all forms of bullying should they encounter it.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders' skill in improving teaching is a strength in the school. Teachers have enthusiastically embraced the programme for their professional development and there was a clear impact on the quality of teaching from recent training in school. The school has a series of partnerships with other local schools through the Pyramid Trust and Moorland Schools and teachers regularly share best practice. The school's evaluation of teaching over time and senior leaders' judgements of lessons agreed with the outcomes of lesson observations during the inspection.
- Both senior and middle leaders have high expectations of staff and they agree rigorous and carefully planned performance management targets with them. More is expected of teachers on the upper pay scale and teachers understand the link between students' achievements and pay. Underperformance is identified and appropriate support is offered when required.
- The majority of the school's policies are clearly stated and regularly reviewed, including the policy on safeguarding. This has a high priority and is applied consistently. The literacy policy was seen being used across the whole curriculum as well as in English. In a Year 13 lesson in physical education, for example, the students' success criteria included assessing each other's use of literacy. The school's marking policy, however, is not yet fully developed and is not always applied in all subject areas and key stages. This means that students are not always entirely clear about how they can improve their written work.
- At Key Stage 4 the school has four curriculum 'pathways' that are tailored to the needs of students and certain GCSE's can be taken early but only if there is a compelling reason to do so.
- The school promotes very well the social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of the curriculum. This is integrated into lessons and the life of the school. For example a Year 12 biology lesson was seen with a discussion of religious attitudes to blood transfusion. Childcare students showed a good understanding of equal opportunities while debating the social impact of disability benefits. Regular assemblies, often taken by the students themselves, further promote understanding, including the diversity of modern Britain. Visits are organised to mosques, churches and synagogues and students also have an international perspective with involvement in the Comenius Project in Europe and links to a school in Kenya.
- The school's ongoing evaluation of its own performance is realistic and self-critical and is closely linked to its planning for improvements. Senior leaders share with staff, governors and students their desire to raise aspirations and are finding ways in which to include parents further in this endeavour. Most parents would recommend the school to others and the large majority believe it is well led and managed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body have a very clear oversight of the school's finances and plan prudently for the future. The governors' commitment to the school is evident in their careful handling of the conversion to academy status and the constructive challenge that they offer to the senior leaders. They are well trained and informed about current educational issues and are familiar with the data relating to students' performance. They manage the performance of the principal through targets and reviews and oversee the performance of staff at all levels with an unambiguous attitude to underachievement. The governors know where the funding from the pupil premium is being spent and can identify the impact of this expenditure.

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	137356
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	413338

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	783
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Bailey
Principal	Thomas Abbott
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01782 523977
Fax number	01782 523977
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