



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection Report

THE BURGATE SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

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LEA: Hampshire

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Reporting Inspector: Barry King HMI

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was
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INTRODUCTION

This inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of The Burgate School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was conducted by five of Her Majesty's Inspectorate and an independent lay inspector.

Key to grades

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1 | Very good |
| 2 | Good |
| 3 | Adequate |
| 4 | Not adequate |

Description of the school

The Burgate School and Sixth Form Centre is a popular comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 19, attracting about 30% of its intake from across county boundaries. It has 927 pupils, of whom 192 are in the sixth form. Over 95% are from white British backgrounds and none speak English as an additional language. Few pupils come from homes experiencing economic hardship, and the number of pupils with special educational needs is low for a school of this size. The standards already achieved by pupils at the time they enter the school are above average.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Effectiveness of the school

The senior management correctly see the school as good, with some strong features. The pupils attain high standards and make good progress, particularly in the highly successful sixth form. The high quality of the school's care for individual pupils is reflected in their warm regard for it. Pupils feel safe, enjoy their school lives, grow confident and flourish in many ways. Good teaching, an improved curriculum and effective leadership and management all make important contributions to the school's strong performance and ensure that it provides good value for money. There are a few pockets of weakness, which currently impair the overall effectiveness of the school, such as in modern foreign languages. However, the school is dealing with them decisively. It also recognises that it could improve the way it plans and monitors its performance. This will be necessary to strengthen the overall quality of teaching in order to reach the ambitious long-term goals it sets for itself.

Grade: 2

Effectiveness of the school's sixth form

The sixth form has grown significantly in strength and popularity since it was established in 1995. The school has judged it to be very effective and on the basis of their scrutiny of data, observation of lessons and discussions with staff and students; inspectors agree with this assessment. Students are very well supported by their teachers and tutors and retention and pass rates are high. Teaching is very effective not only in ensuring that learners make very good progress in individual subjects but also in developing their confidence, motivation and social awareness. Sixth form students act as excellent role models for the rest of the school. Leadership and management are very good and managers deploy resources carefully to accommodate the learning needs of individual pupils and provide very good value for money.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has improved well since the previous inspection in 1999. Standards have risen faster than in other schools in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, although weaknesses in one or two subjects have meant that progress has been slower in Key Stage 4. It has retained the high quality of its care for individual pupils, and has kept up the good standard of teaching in most areas. The weaknesses in the curriculum, noted at the last inspection, have been remedied, and there is also greater choice for pupils in their GCSE years but issues related to marking and assessment have not been fully resolved.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The school retains the good capacity to improve that it has shown over the past few years. Its evaluation of its performance is accurate and it deals effectively with its major weaknesses. The many strengths of the school provide a strong platform on which to build.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

The school has a sure-footed understanding of what it must do to become highly effective. In the shorter term it should iron out inconsistency in the performance of subjects, particularly by improving standards in modern foreign languages.

In the longer term, it should refine the quality of the teaching, by making pupils think more for themselves and so extend their capacity to do well. Pupils also need to be given more consistent feedback from the marking and assessment of their work. There is already some very good practice on which to build, but this should be developed through a more sustained programme of monitoring which leads to improved professional development for teachers.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

Overall, the standards are high but there are differing rates of progress in each of the key stages.

When pupils enter the school in Year 7 their standards are above average, as indicated by test scores at Key Stage 2. Pupils capitalise on this and make particularly good progress in Key Stage 3 in English and adequate progress in mathematics and science.

At the end of Key Stage 4, a high percentage of pupils get five, or more, higher grades and a very high percentage attain five or more graded results, reflecting the school's aim to be inclusive. Results are well above the national average in most subject areas, including English and the humanities. The school is aware that results in French are low and has embarked on a series of measures to raise standards in this subject.

The overall progress in Key Stage 4, whilst good, is uneven, as recognised by the school. Most pupils progress at a good rate and some, including vulnerable children, and those with low prior attainment or special educational needs, make very good progress, as reflected in the percentage of pupils getting GCSE grades in English, mathematics and science. Much effort is made to minimise the number of pupils who under-perform. There is no significant variation in progress between boys and girls when compared to the national picture.

In the sixth form, results have improved markedly both in terms of the number of passes as well as the proportion with grades A or B. These results are high and this represents very good progress in most subjects. The school took effective action after disappointing grades in mathematics in 2002, resulting in much better performance in 2003.

Grade: 2

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The inspection evidence confirms the school's view that attendance and punctuality throughout the school, and retention in the sixth form, are very good. This is because the targets and systems for reinforcement, for example through prizegiving ceremonies, are challenging, consistently applied and monitored well. The school is rightly proud of the infrequency of exclusions. Pupils confirm that the new forms of support identified by the school to increase positive attitudes and behaviour are working very well. This has resulted in the vast majority of pupils becoming involved in the school, having the opportunity to take roles of responsibility and influence their school lives. Examples of

this are the influence of the school council and suggestion boxes to shape school rules and procedures in significant ways.

The school recognises the positive contribution that tutor groups have on all aspects of personal development. This is particularly evident in those spiritual, moral and social elements that culminate in raising self-esteem and confidence. Physically-orientated extra-curricular activities and the emphasis on healthy living permeate the culture of the school. The pupils' development is extended by their exposure to other cultures, via trips abroad and activities weeks. The growth in self-confidence that the school successfully nurtures provides the pupils with the capacity to make a positive contribution to the community.

The school evaluates the overall personal development of pupils as good, but the inspection evidence demonstrates that it is better than this and is a very strong feature of its work.

Grade: 1

1. QUALITY OF PROVISION

The school's view that the quality of teaching is good, with some very strong features, is well founded. It explains why standards are as high as they are. The judgements that senior managers make of the quality of individual lessons are well founded. This was demonstrated when they joined inspectors for the observation of two lessons. Inspectors' visits to lessons, and discussions with pupils, further confirmed that teaching is strong in most parts of the school. It was clear that teachers are well informed and have very good relationships with the pupils, who come ready and willing to learn. Teachers plan their lessons well and systematically move the pupils forward. In the best lessons, they take things a stage further by stimulating the pupils' interest and curiosity and by making them think hard about what they are doing. However, the pupils can be all too willing to let teachers do much of the work for them. From the evidence of several lessons seen, teachers need to stimulate and stretch the pupils more if standards are to be securely levered up. Many pupils explained that their work is not thoroughly marked and assessed, an issue from the previous inspection that has not been resolved. They would also like to have more active involvement in self-assessment to help them understand better where and how they need to improve their work.

The school offers a good curriculum that has improved since the last inspection. At that time, the pupils did not have sufficient time to study the creative arts and have a broad curriculum. The school reports accurately that it now has a flexible curriculum which not only offers the creative arts more effectively but also an opportunity for pupils to study vocational courses at Key Stage 4. There is good access to careers guidance and external speakers, and a good take-up of the wide range of sporting and cultural activities offered by the school. In the sixth form, pupils have a good choice of academic courses and their education is broadened by taking general studies. The school has appointed staff to improve deficiencies in the music curriculum, and it has made more time available for religious education in the sixth form. More consideration could be given to the ways in which the national strategy for Key Stage 3 might benefit pupils. A particular strength of the school, and a good example of how it values its pupils, is the way it consults them to help ensure that the curriculum meets their needs and aspirations.

The school judges correctly that its procedures for guiding and sustaining vulnerable pupils and those with special education needs are very good. These pupils are most effectively supported by teaching assistants in the classroom who feedback progress,

related to the individual learning plans, to the coordinator. Excellent relationships exist with external bodies and parents, so that this and other information regarding such pupils is shared and built upon. The school is not complacent and continues to develop and build on its relationships and support systems. The pupils are appropriately involved in setting their own targets through individual learning plans. These plans involve self-evaluation by the pupils, a process they value greatly, with continuous assessment and monitoring by the supporting staff.

The school measures its own, highly effective performance, against how well it has met the individuals' needs. This enhances the quality and effectiveness of the evaluation which is very good. The underpinning ethos of the school is that pupils are known as, and treated as, individuals. This, as they quite rightly acknowledge, results in a very high quality of pastoral care for all pupils.

Grade: 2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher has led the school very well over a long period of time, driving up standards, significantly improving the popularity of the school and establishing a highly successful sixth form. The humane values that permeate the school and ensure the inclusion of all pupils are another important hallmark of her success. The other senior managers complement her skills effectively. The reorganised middle management system, though generally effective, is not uniformly so, as shown by the difference in performance between subjects. The school's current priorities are not as clear as they might be, and the performance targets are not translated systematically into personal objectives for teachers.

The senior managers of the school are long-serving and have developed a very good knowledge of their colleagues and the pupils. They also know well the school's main strengths and weaknesses, and are energetic in seeking improvements, but at times need to think more widely of the best methods to be adopted. The system of target-setting helps to provide goals for pupils, lift standards and combat underachievement, but the school should consider whether it should share them more fully with the pupils. The targets give the school a sense of direction and the school is taking steps to provide more standardised measures of its performance. The monitoring of lessons provides accurate assessments of the quality of teaching, but it is limited in scope and does not feed consistently into the professional development of staff and the ways in which they can stretch pupils more effectively.

Governors provide strong backing for the school, but recognise that they have yet to ensure full statutory compliance in terms of the curriculum. They also need to ratify a few policies, including that for race equality, although the school is highly effective in promoting this despite the lack of an adopted policy. The school has adequate staffing, accommodation and resources, which it uses well, but it has been forced into a budget deficit this year. It makes effective links with other providers of education and care.

The school's evaluation of the quality of its leadership and management as good overall is accurate, given the strengths and areas for development noted above. This assessment also reflects the overall quality of the education and care currently provided, and the standards achieved. Relatively modest improvements to the way the school is run could make the small but cumulative differences that would turn it into a very good school indeed.

Grade: 2

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