

Blackfen School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101465
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	276521
Inspection dates	2–3 November 2005
Reporting inspector	Christine Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Monger-Godfrey Ms L Sharples
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Blackfen Road Sidcup Kent DA15 9NU
Telephone number	02083031887
Fax number	02082981656

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Blackfen School for Girls is a non-selective school in Bexley with a growing mixed gender sixth form. More students come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds than in schools nationally and more do not have English as their first language. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is low as is the percentage of students with special educational needs. Blackfen is a specialist school for mathematics and computing and is a centre of excellence for the use of interactive whiteboards. The school provides a wide variety of trips, visits and links with other schools that broaden students' experiences both in and out of school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade:

What the school should do to improve further

* extend provision of vocational education courses in Key Stage 4* Include more opportunities for students to work as independent learners

Achievement and standards

Grade:

Personal development and well-being

Grade:

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade:

Teaching is always at least good and some is outstanding. A good focus on planning for a variety of activities makes sure that many lessons are fast-paced and challenging. This planning includes regular homework that makes an important contribution to students' learning. In many lessons the use of ICT, especially interactive whiteboards, to support learning is a particular strength. Students are motivated by this technology and feel it makes their lessons 'more exciting and interesting'. Teachers have very good relationships with students, respecting their contributions in lessons and listening to them carefully. Both teachers and students are well supported by the effective and committed learning assistants. Students are eager and successful learners and appreciate the efforts made by the staff to help them succeed. For example a year 10 student knows that 'teachers are keen for you to do well.' Thorough assessment of students work ensures they know what level they are working at. This is supported by good individual targets that are highlighted in the students' books and learning journals. Students have a mature attitude towards their education. They enjoy learning and work hard. Some work has been done on encouraging the students to be more involved in learning for themselves but there is scope for this to be developed further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade:

The curriculum provides a good range of academic opportunities. Specialist status has brought particular benefits to mathematics and computing with increased time and improved resources. There is a good emphasis on developing literacy skills across the school with strong contributions from individual subjects. At Key Stage 4 the good choice of GCSE courses is complemented by a wide range of ICT qualifications. Although the school has introduced vocational subjects such as Health and Social Care, the take-up of these courses is limited. There is scope to widen the range of vocational courses offered to the students. Students in the sixth form can choose from a good selection of AS and A level subjects as well as a growing number of vocational courses. The school works hard to ensure that the courses provided match the students' needs. For example the new Level 1 course in Hospitality is proving popular. Students join in enthusiastically with the good variety of activities organised outside of lessons. Sporting and ICT activities are especially well-liked and the extensive range of school visits and trips are popular.

Care, guidance and support

Grade:

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support, students feel secure and are happy and confident. Great emphasis is placed on the welfare and progress of all students as well as their health and safety. All staff are thoroughly trained in procedures for dealing with child protection issues and assessing risks. Vulnerable students are well supported in a variety of ways that ensures that they feel secure. The roles of the school counsellor and outside agencies such as the Bexley Management Support Service are highly valued as they offer support and advice when required. The annual careers forum gives valuable career advice and guidance to all students and this is supported by work related experiences in Key Stage 4. Tracking systems are used to monitor students' attainment and progress thoroughly and to identify those who need greater support as well as those who would benefit from greater challenge. Students regularly evaluate their own work and discuss future targets for learning with their teachers in some depth. Younger students are proud to collect awards for good work and feel their work is valued as it is displayed prominently. Sixth form students value the weekly meeting with tutors when concerns can be shared and advice given.

Leadership and management

Grade:

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We visited your school on 2 and 3 of November 2005 and I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. We enjoyed our visit very much and it was a pleasure to talk to you about your life in school and to watch you enjoying your lessons. If you read our report it will tell you in more detail about what your school does well and how it could be made even better.

You are rightly proud of your school and we found it to be a good place in which to grow and learn. The main strengths are: * You enjoy school, work hard and achieve good results* Your behaviour is good and you take very good care of each other* You appreciate the good teaching that helps you to learn* There are good relationships in the school between staff and students. You work well together and respect each other* The school takes excellent care of you and you feel safe and secure * The school make sure that there are excellent opportunities for every one of you to achieve as well as you can* Many of you join in the good range of out of school activities that are organised* You are keen to take a full part in school life, for example through your active and influential school council

We have made a few recommendations to try to make your good school even better. We would like the school to provide you with more opportunities to take vocational courses in years 10 and 11 to give you a better experience of work related learning. We also think that you could improve the way you study and learn on your own. Thank you for your contribution to this inspection. You are a credit to yourselves as well as the school and your parents.