



# Bridgewater High School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 111447  
**LEA** Warrington  
**Inspection number** 278701  
**Inspection dates** 28 November 2005 to 29 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Ralph Higgs CfBT Lead Inspector

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>              | Secondary          | <b>School address</b>     | Broomfields Road                |
| <b>School category</b>             | Community          |                           | Appleton                        |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>         | 11 to 18           |                           | Warrington, Cheshire WA4<br>3AE |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>            | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b>   | 01925 263 919                   |
| <b>Number on roll</b>              | 1709               | <b>Fax number</b>         | 01925 861 434                   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>       | The governing body | <b>Chair of governors</b> | Mr S Whatmore                   |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | 31 January 2000    | <b>Headteacher</b>        | Mr Christopher Marks            |

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|------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>Age group</b><br>11 to 18 | <b>Inspection dates</b><br>28 November 2005 -<br>29 November 2005 | <b>Inspection number</b><br>278701 |
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Bridgewater High School (Specialist Performing Arts College) is a very large mixed comprehensive school with an average size sixth form. It recently gained recognition as a High Performing Specialist College. It is a very popular school, serving families from largely advantaged areas of the southern outskirts of Warrington. About 4% of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a good school, which provides good value for money. It has several outstanding features. Inspectors agree with the school's view on its overall effectiveness. The school is well led and effectively managed. There is a firm commitment to the headteacher's very clear vision to use Specialist College status to bring excellence. Good teaching and an innovative curriculum, which promotes the arts very effectively, contribute to good progress and well above average standards by Year 11, and satisfactory and improving progress in the sixth form. However, the most recent results in Year 9 show that the highest attaining students did not make expected progress. Very good links with the wider community considerably enhance the school's provision. Consequently, students' personal development is good overall, and their cultural development is outstanding. Their behaviour is good and they enjoy school.

The school provides a good quality education for all groups of students in a safe and stimulating environment, despite the constraints of some of its accommodation. Students greatly value the care and guidance given by the school. They say they feel safe and are learning how to be healthy. Most parents have confidence in the quality of education and care provided.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good and standards have risen rapidly in recent years. The school evaluates itself honestly, and there is a very good understanding on the part of governors and key staff of what is needed to move the school forward. These include, improving the consistency and challenge of teaching; developing greater independence in learning, particularly through the use of information and communication technology (ICT); strengthening systems of assessment; and extending vocational opportunities. The school is well placed to act on these priorities.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's view that the effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It provides good value for money. Standards are above average and some subjects, such as psychology and sociology, perform strongly. Recent results show that progress is improving and most students make at least expected progress from their standards on entry to the sixth form.

Students are very appreciative of the support and guidance they receive, although they feel careers advice could be improved. Teaching and learning are good overall, but in satisfactory lessons there is too much reliance on the teacher. The use of data to monitor progress is well established and is bringing improvement to standards and the performance of some courses. The curriculum offers a wide range of academic but few vocational courses. However, the foundation course for lower attaining students is very well conceived.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and further develop the use of assessment, so as to provide greater challenge, particularly for the most able students.
- Improve students' capacity to learn independently through more active participation in lessons, a wider use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the development of study skills.
- Build on recent initiatives to develop a broader range of vocational opportunities.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Overall, standards are well above average and rising. The school has recently exceeded the targets set for Year 11, indicating a capacity to set even more challenging targets in future.

Students have entered the school with above average standards but recently the number of high attaining students has risen considerably. All groups of students make good progress to reach significantly above average standards by the end of Year 11. However, recent results in Year 9 national tests indicate that some of the most able students underperformed.

A high percentage of students get five or more higher grades in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and a very high percentage attain five or more graded results, reflecting the school's aim to be inclusive. Results in most subjects are good. The school is aware that progress slows in English and mathematics in Years 10 and 11 and has introduced measures to raise standards and improve progress, with some success.

Standards in the sixth form are above average and most students make at least expected progress in relation to their GCSE results by the end of Year 13. There are signs of more rapid progress amongst current year groups.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The school says, and inspectors agree that students' personal development is good. Students enjoy being at school, borne out by their good attendance and the positive attitudes generally shown in lessons. They behave well in lessons and around school and the small proportion who do not are given good support to improve. Students are typically courteous and polite to adults and each other. They move around the school in an orderly manner although narrow corridors in the lower school create some congestion. Students have confidence that any incidents of bullying are dealt with rapidly and effectively. They say they feel safe and well supported.

Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good and their cultural development is outstanding, greatly enhanced by the many opportunities during and after school, particularly in the arts. They empathise with the needs of others as shown by their good response to charitable appeals.

Students welcome the healthy food options on offer and show good awareness of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They are well prepared for their future economic well-being by well organised work experience and schemes such as Young Enterprise. The school council is becoming established; students are keen to have their views heard and feel they can make a difference. Sixth form students take opportunities to make a positive contribution to the school and the wider community.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall in the main school and the sixth form, ranging from satisfactory to outstanding. Students generally work hard, respond well and make good progress. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and relationships are typically good. Lessons are generally well planned with clear objectives used to focus learning. Work is usually well matched to students' learning needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, there is the scope for more demanding work and more active learning, especially in satisfactory lessons. Insufficient use is made of ICT to enliven learning, and promote independent study. Improving the quality of learning is a central part of the school's improvement plan but its impact is not evident yet in all lessons.

Assessment procedures are satisfactory and improving. The school has developed effective systems to help students understand the standard they are working at and their targets for the future. However, there is limited use of self-assessment and, at times, teachers' questioning lacks the depth required to challenge students to think for themselves. Teachers regularly check students' work and praise their efforts, but the quality of marking is inconsistent. In the best examples, teachers clearly show how students can improve their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Students achieve well because the curriculum is well planned, regularly updated and refined to meet individual needs. Keeping safe and healthy living are promoted well. In Key Stage 3, it is broad and balanced while providing opportunities for all students to study a full range of performing arts subjects. Students who are able or have a specialised interest can accelerate their learning through early examination entry in most years in a number of subjects, including art and design. In Key Stage 4, the curriculum provides appropriate continuity and a good range of options, including three separate sciences. Provision for ICT has recently improved.

The school is embarking on initiatives to develop vocational education and extend work-related learning. These include successful foundation courses in partnership with a neighbouring college. The sixth form curriculum is successfully broadened through key skills and enrichment programmes. The school's specialist status as a Performing Arts College adds distinctiveness and combines well with many popular activities to offer students an outstanding range of extra-curricular experiences.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school takes good care of its students and gives them good quality guidance and support. The learning support department very effectively supports vulnerable students by good liaison with their parents and external agencies. Child protection procedures are firmly established and recent training has ensured their effective application. Appropriate risk assessments ensure the school is safe and secure.

Changes to the pastoral system have strengthened the school's ability to identify and support students who may be at risk of underachieving or who find it difficult to adapt to school life. Regular checks on progress provide clear feedback to parents and students. Mentoring schemes and additional provision for the gifted and talented help students reach their targets.

Transition arrangements are good and allow Year 7 students to settle in quickly and feel confident. Good guidance is given to older students on course choices, although the school knows that access to the Connexions careers service needs improvement.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher's leadership has been outstanding over a significant period ensuring continued improvement and the school's good reputation. A team of dynamic and committed senior managers share his vision and provide effective direction to staff and students. New senior and middle managers have given added impetus to recent developments. The school has good systems in place to keep a check on how well it is doing. It uses the information gathered from this exercise to inform the school improvement plan. The senior team is fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Intervention strategies to tackle underachievement have been effective.

The school has recently sought the opinions of staff, students and parents and is beginning to act upon them. The school is welcoming and inclusive and students are encouraged to play an increasing part in school life.

Despite the challenges presented by the split site, the school is run efficiently and systems are well established. The school is fully staffed by specialist teachers, resources are very well used and the specialist arts provision has enhanced learning and improved achievement. Very good financial management has ensured good value for money. The school enjoys strong community links, which enhance its work. Governors are highly effective and provide outstanding support and challenge. The senior team and

middle managers have ensured good progress since the last inspection and have considerable capacity to make further improvements.



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## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |              |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | <b>School Overall</b> | <b>16-19</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 2   | 2   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 2   | 2   |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage  | NA  | NA  |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | Yes | Yes |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 2 | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 |   |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |   |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |   |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |   |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 |   |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |   |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |   |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 2 |   |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |   |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 | 2 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 2 | 2 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 | 2 |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   |     |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review      | 2   |     |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |     |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |     |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 1   |     |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected  | Yes | Yes |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>  |     |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily  | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise  | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse   | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>   |     |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements                                   | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place  | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism                                | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>  |     |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships   | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them                   | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>                           |     |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills  | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams                                  | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form          | Yes |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy               | Yes |

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team last week. We found your views very interesting and they were very useful to us in helping to understand your school.

These are the main things we found out during our visit:

Bridgewater High School is a good school; in fact we found some aspects of the school are outstanding. Your school is well led and the headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to provide you with a good education.

Your behaviour is good. We noticed that most students worked hard in lessons and got on well with one another. Your attendance is good and we agree with you that school is enjoyable because staff try hard to provide you with interesting lessons and to provide an outstanding range of out of school activities.

Teachers plan a good range of subjects for you to learn, which helps you make good progress and learn useful skills. You receive good advice about which courses to take, but we agree with the school that a greater range of vocational subjects would help you more. You told us that you know how to stay healthy and keep safe. The school cares well for you and you say good advice is available from staff you trust.

We asked your parents and carers for their views and most of them say they have great confidence in the work of the school in helping you to succeed.

Standards are high but we think that your school has the staff and resources to help you do even better. The staff and governors are going to be working very hard to achieve this. They will be extending the methods already used in some subjects, including using computers more, to help you learn better and improve your work.

Thank you once again for talking to us and being helpful during the inspection.