



The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116991
LEA Herefordshire
Inspection number 279971
Inspection dates 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005
Reporting inspector Brian Cartwright HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Hampton Dene Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Tupsley
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Hereford, Herefordshire HR1 1UU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01432 347500
Number on roll	1188	Fax number	01432 347566
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Keith Lawton
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mr Andrew Marson

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 7 December 2005 - 8 December 2005	Inspection number 279971
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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

This is the only Voluntary Aided (VA) Church of England comprehensive school in the Diocese of Herefordshire. It is a little larger than most 11–16 schools. 60% of pupils are from the local area. There are few pupils claiming free school meals, low numbers of minority ethnic pupils, and very few pupils whose first language is not English. 25% of pupils are on the school's special needs register, with 5% having statements of special needs (twice the average). The socio-economic profile of the pupils' background is favourable. The school is a Specialist Technology College. It is a designated Training School and one of the Marches Consortium providers for School-Centred Initial Teacher Training.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School is outstanding. It provides good teaching, good curricular provision and excellent care, guidance and support. These factors, combined with strong parental support and motivated pupils, ensure outstanding progress for all learners. The school is well led and managed and has no areas of significant weaknesses. Consistently good performance by all departments maintains high overall standards. The school is adequately resourced and the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good and well used by staff and pupils. Value for money is good.

Staff meticulously track and monitor the progress of every pupil, then provide excellent personal support for those at risk of underachieving. Learners with difficulties and disabilities are fully engaged with the school. Those on the register of special educational needs make exceptionally good progress. A rich programme of out-of-hours activities maintains pupils' motivation. The pupils' good commitment to the school and to their own learning is evident in their very high attendance and the low numbers of exclusions.

The school has reviewed the integration of pupils in its Kielder centre, in response to the previous inspection recommendations. The excellent outcomes for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities illustrate the continuing effectiveness of this complex provision. This shows good capacity to improve, as do rising standards since the previous inspection. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness (good) did not fully recognise the very high achievement of pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no significant issues that must be addressed. The school should prioritise its review of the effectiveness of behaviour management policy. It can draw upon the excellent practice developed through its work with challenging pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils enter the school with above-average standards. End-of-Year 9 results in the 2004 National tests were well above average and they were even higher in 2005. A large proportion of the pupils gained the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. These results represent outstanding progress through Key Stage 3.

2004 standards at GCSE were also exceptionally high. All subjects did well except for the short course in religious education. The progress these pupils made through the school placed the school amongst the highest 10% of schools in 2004. In 2005, results show that these high standards have been maintained, with gains in A* to C grades, but a slight fall in the number of very high grades. Work seen during the inspection showed very high standards. Most groups of learners achieve very well, with remarkably good progress by pupils on the register of special educational needs. There are no

groups of pupils underachieving. Boys made slightly better progress than girls. Progress from Key Stage 3 to 4 is good, and the school is focusing on improving this by undertaking a timely review of its Key Stage 4 curriculum.

The school sets challenging targets that are much higher than prior attainment data would recommend, and hits them consistently. This very good progress demonstrates outstanding achievement and standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The good social skills of pupils are evident in their ability to work together and organise events to raise money for charities. This includes raising funds to build a school in Uganda. Their awareness of other cultures is well expressed in their work and there is a good level of participation in music and drama productions. Pupils are especially considerate towards pupils who have impaired mobility. New pupils are made welcome in part through the links, formed both before and during their time in Year 7, with senior school volunteers. Opportunities for spiritual reflection are plentiful, although not always well taken, or well regarded, by some pupils. There are regular formal services throughout the Church year and weekly voluntary communion, as befits the school's religious foundation. Pupils are clear about the right way to relate to each other, and have high moral standards. There are very few serious disciplinary issues and low numbers of exclusions. There is a formal school council and system of prefects. However, not every pupil is fully aware of what the council does and some feel their views are ignored.

Behaviour is good overall. In some classes, excellent management of challenging pupils produces a calm and positive working environment. However, in lessons where pupils' attention is not fully engaged there can be too much low-level disruption. Some parents feel that behaviour is not always good. The school and governors are acutely aware of these concerns.

Attendance is well above average. This contributes significantly to high standards as pupils complete their courses without interruption. Pupils arrive punctually to lessons most of the time. Pupils are motivated to work hard out of school and this independent study plays an important part in their success. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and take a pride in it, with particular enthusiasm for the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Their good self-discipline contributes to the effective way pupils stay safe and follow health and safety advice. Their high participation in sport and high take-up of the good diet available in school helps keep them fit and healthy.

Many pupils take part in the public service aspect of the Bishop's Award or the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. This ensures an excellent contribution to the local community, and is a key strength in the development of pupils at the school. Workplace skills are well developed through opportunities to take responsibility for the welfare of others, for example, in the school's peer mentoring scheme and through the attachment of prefects to younger tutor groups. The ICT Key Skills and very high standards in English and mathematics complete the outstanding preparation for pupils' next steps.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. The best lessons are characterised by expert planning that directs tasks to match the learning capabilities of pupils, then captures their interest. Any challenging behaviour is skilfully managed. Pupils are included in class discussions by carefully directed questioning and given ample opportunity for independent and group work. They take genuine delight in their achievements, for example, in producing their first ink 'Print' in art, or discovering starch during food testing, or sharing their music compositions. This increases their self-motivation. Pupils' work is helpfully marked, informing them what they should do to improve. In practical subjects, pupils demonstrate good personal organisation as a result of good training in workshop and laboratory procedures. The few weaker lessons lacked a crisp start and subsequent motivating focus. The resultant distracting behaviour was poorly managed.

Training school status has contributed to rising standards, most particularly in science, modern foreign languages and music. There is a comprehensive teacher training programme run by the school's training centre that serves other local authority schools.

The school meticulously monitors pupils' progress, identifies learners at risk of underachievement, then intervenes with effective personal support and mentoring. This is one of the key factors in raising attainment. Pupils with learning difficulties are closely supported in the integral Kielder Special Education Needs (SEN) centre. In mainstream classes, good teaching assistants contribute significantly to the outstanding progress of pupils on the SEN register. The school devolves marking policy to departments and, as a result, pupils experience different approaches. Pupils generally know their current performance and how this relates to national levels and grades. Many also know their final target grades and what they need to do to achieve them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has maintained a broad and balanced curriculum in Key Stage 4. All pupils take an ICT key skills course. Recent changes have introduced a vocational option and reduced the total number of examined subjects for about a quarter of pupils. There is a work-related learning programme for a small number of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are helped towards GCSE or entry level qualifications where possible. The curriculum is good enough to ensure most pupils can continue with their chosen career paths, which for the majority is further education.

There is an excellent and diverse programme of extra-curricular activities in which nearly every pupil participates. There are morning, lunchtime and after-school sessions. This is a key factor in maintaining the commitment and motivation of pupils throughout the school. Sport and the performing arts are strongly represented. There is access to the library and ICT centres out of lesson time. Day trips and residential visits at home and abroad enrich the learning and personal development of all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school meets the requirements for child protection and health and safety procedures. There is a full-time counsellor and an innovative 'listening link' where senior pupils are available to discuss concerns, such as bullying. Pupils report that incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. The school's pastoral system supports learners well. The effective house system helps to maintain motivation and deals with pupil concerns.

Careers guidance is excellent. Pupils understand the options available very well and are confident in their ability to make appropriate choices. Key Stage 3 options guidance is equally effective. Marking and assessment ensure pupils are aware of their current progress towards their targets and they know what they should do to reach them. The support available to pupils, in particular those with learning difficulties, is very effective in ensuring their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and have secured consistently high levels of achievement over time. The headteacher provides a clear lead on the maintenance of high standards and is well supported by other members of the leadership team. Middle managers play an important and successful role in strategic developments. They regularly monitor lessons, using this analysis to develop strategies that improve learning in their departments. The school does not analyse these lesson reviews as a whole, so is not able to provide a common lead on areas for improvement. The school rigorously reviews examination results, setting challenging targets to raise pupils' achievement. However, these targets are often too general and lack measurable outcomes, so quality assurance is difficult. The school does not review the effectiveness of its policies, although its self-evaluation has accurately identified areas for focus. The judgements by managers of lesson quality are accurate.

The school systematically seeks the views of parents through formal questionnaires. The headteacher uses complaints as further reasons for review and change, and reports the outcomes to governors. The school council formally meets with school management twice yearly to offer their view, but the views of all pupils are not systematically canvassed.

The school's promotion of equal opportunities is outstanding, ensuring absence of discrimination in all aspects of school life. Resources are effectively deployed and the school provides good value for money. Governors know the school well. They take an active interest in all aspects of school life through good link governor arrangements that give independence to their monitoring of school performance. The school continues to review the integration of pupils in its Kielder centre. It responds carefully to external initiatives, and is consulting fully on changes to staff management structures. The

school retains the capacity to maintain high performance, and has done so over many years.

The Technology College Initiative has had a positive effect on improved standards in technology and given more opportunities for pupils to use computers. Technology provision itself is not distinctive, but the school's development of technology and ICT in partner schools is outstanding.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ 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

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

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School Hampton Dean Road Tupsley Hereford Herefordshire HR1 1UU

8 December 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for your time you gave us to talk about your school this week. Your knowledge of and enthusiasm for the school helped us to understand the way the school works for you.

We think your school is giving you an outstanding education that makes sure you really do achieve to your potential. This is because you are usually experiencing good teaching and you are well-motivated, hard working learners. You show great care and consideration for others, particularly those in the greatest need. The school knows your progress very well, and provides you with excellent care, guidance and support. You usually show excellent behaviour in lessons, especially when you enjoy the subject and the way that teachers guide your learning.

Occasionally, some pupils make learning difficult for everyone else by chattering during lessons or ignoring the teacher altogether.

The huge range of extra activities and trips is a real bonus for you and we are impressed by how many of you take part. You also take homework seriously, which helps a great deal in giving you more practice, and reinforces your learning. Your attendance rates are excellent.

The teachers are planning better ways to help manage the odd niggles about behaviour. You should continue to be proud of your school and try your best to represent it by the way you act whilst you are wearing its uniform. It is doing an excellent job in equipping you for your future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright Her Majesty's Inspector