



Bishop Vesey's Grammar School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 103535
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286691
Inspection dates 8–9 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Rzeznik HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Lichfield Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Sutton Coldfield
Age range of pupils	11–18		B74 2NH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 2505400
Number on roll (school)	612	Fax number	0121 2505420
Number on roll (6th form)	275		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Howard Tillotson
		Headteacher	David Iddon
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	8–9 November 2006	286691

Amended Report Addendum

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

It is a selective voluntary aided grammar school with a large sixth form. Students are selected by ability into the main school and sixth form and the intake is from a wide catchment area. Attainment on entry is high. In the sixth form around a quarter are girls. Most students are from White British backgrounds; around a fifth are of Asian origin. A small number are of Black, Chinese or mixed heritage. A significant minority of students are bilingual and have English as an additional language. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals, with learning difficulties, and statements of special educational need are low. The school gained specialist language status in March 2002. It has recently been re-accredited with the Sports Mark Gold Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. It is improving and has some good and outstanding features.

In 2006, standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 were exceptionally high. Standards were high at the end of Year 13. Whilst students' progress was satisfactory between Years 7 and 11 it was not as good as it could be, particularly in English. Their progress in the sixth form however was good. In modern foreign languages, standards and the quality of leadership are not yet high enough. Students say that they enjoy school life and this is demonstrated in their outstanding attendance and positive attitudes to learning.

Good personal development and well-being lead to students who are self-confident, articulate and well behaved. They are enthusiastic and have a real desire to succeed. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Racial harmony is a key strength of the school.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. There are examples of good and outstanding teaching but it is inconsistent. Systems to monitor and review teaching quality are not yet rigorous enough in the main school to further increase the rate of progress and iron out inconsistent practice.

The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory and ensures students make the expected progress over time. Provision in the sixth form is good. Specialist status in languages has not yet resulted in a good enough upturn in the standards achieved. The enrichment programme is outstanding. It includes a wide variety of trips, visitors, and residential and sporting activities. Care is good and arrangements for health and safety are outstanding. Pastoral support and guidance are good. Academic support in the main school is satisfactory. Challenging targets are set at the ends of Years 9 and 11, but a significant minority of students do not get enough support to reach these in English and mathematics.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. The school has sound systems for tracking students' attainment but these are not yet underpinned by a robust enough analysis of students' progress over time. This means the school has a more generous view of students' progress between Years 7 and 11 than the school outcomes warrant. The school has developed effective partnerships with a range of benefactors, and the injection of funds from outside sources has significantly improved the premises and facilities.

The school's capacity to improve further is good, as demonstrated by the increased rates of progress in the sixth form.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good and improving because effective leadership has successfully brought about a rise in standards. Standards are high and have improved each year

since 2003 so that now students are making good progress given their original starting points. However, they are not achieving high enough standards in modern foreign languages. The curriculum is well matched to students' needs and abilities and progression routes are clear and well established. The contribution students make to the school and its community is outstanding. Their responsibilities as mentors, fund raisers and coaches provide excellent role models for the rest of the school community. The leadership provided by the head of sixth form is good. Students' progress is effectively tracked and when their progress dips strategies are employed to improve teaching and learning. For example, when girls were found to be making less progress than boys, staff training and development was put in place which improved the achievement of girls. Students value the good quality guidance they receive on aspects like university entrance. They are well prepared for future choices and make effective use of the available private study facilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and students' progress in modern foreign languages by increasing the effectiveness of subject leadership and management within the department.
- Increase the rate of progress made in Years 9 to 11, particularly in English.
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching in the main school through more rigorous and systematic monitoring, so as to share the good practice that exists more widely.
- Further refine the tracking of students' progress and widen its use to better inform support strategies in the main school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards at the ends of Years 9 and 11 have been consistently high for a number of years. Standards at A level have risen from above average to high in the past year. Students enter the school with high standards and leave it at the same high level. Since September 2004 students have made satisfactory progress between Years 7 and 11. Year 9 results in 2006 indicate that students' progress in mathematics and English has improved from satisfactory to good. It is a similar picture in the sixth form where students' progress has improved from satisfactory to good during the past year. By the age of 16, standards in modern foreign languages and English literature are not yet high enough. In English too many students are getting GCSE grade C when they should be doing better than this.

Students for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress between Years 7 and 9 (Key Stage 3) and good progress between Years 9 and 11 (Key Stage 4). The percentage reaching the top GCSE grades (A/A*) has steadily risen, although there have been fluctuations within subjects from year to year. The school recognises that more of the most able pupils should be acquiring A* grades.

Standards in design and technology (DT) have improved significantly since the previous inspection in 2001 identified them as in need of improvement. The improved picture is a result of better teaching and more effective leadership and management of the subject.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good because students respond well to the school's high expectations of behaviour and the wide variety of opportunities available to them. Students from different backgrounds get on extremely well. They say they feel safe and there is always someone to turn to if they have a concern. Students of all ages understand the principles of a healthy lifestyle and engage enthusiastically in sports activities that keep them fit. There is less enthusiasm though for healthy food options. The travel plan is rightly encouraging students to take more exercise, with more of them coming to school by bike rather than by car. Careers guidance, work experience and enterprise opportunities effectively develop students' work-related skills. The school council makes a positive contribution to decision-making and its views are listened to and acted upon. For example, the prayer room was created in response to a request for one. There is some involvement of students in reviewing the curriculum and quality of teaching and learning but this does not happen across all subjects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form.

Teaching quality ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. Its variety is too wide, leading to inconsistencies in learning. Effective teaching is characterised by a good range of worthwhile activities to engage students' attention and interest, and good relationships and helpful individual questioning to extend and consolidate understanding. Where teaching is less successful, students lose interest because they are insufficiently challenged by a limited variety of activities. On occasions teachers talk too much and do not encourage students to think for themselves, so progress is inhibited. In some subjects, students receive very helpful advice on how well they are doing and how to improve, although this is not consistent across all subjects. Teaching in the sixth form is well focused and suitably challenging and this has led to accelerated progress in this phase.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum successfully promotes students' personal development and encourages them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. It provides a broad and balanced range of activities that meets statutory requirements. Consistent with the school's specialist language status, students in Key Stage 3 study a wide variety of languages including provision for extra courses run as breakfast clubs. In Key Stage 4 students take at least one foreign language and a large proportion take two or three. World of Work days and the strong focus on an international outlook enable students to actively experience the importance of language in business and this suitably develops their economic understanding. A wide range of enrichment activities enhances the curriculum, including an exciting programme of visits locally and abroad. Regular opera and other musical productions successfully broaden school life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students feel safe, secure and are well cared for. Appropriate child protection policies are in place and robust risk assessments are undertaken to ensure the health and safety of pupils as they work on and off site. All staff have been effectively vetted to check their suitability to work with children. Students are set targets and they are aware of them. Nevertheless, they require further support to achieve them in the main school. Academic guidance and monitoring of provision require strengthening as they are not yet resulting in students making better than satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4 and languages.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher and governors have successfully created a common sense of purpose based on the school's five core values. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The self-evaluation done before the inspection started was not sharp enough, in terms of the evaluation of students' progress over time. This is because the tools used for self-review are not yet sufficiently well embedded or refined to be fully effective. Decision making is being delegated to middle managers, who are now much more accountable for the standards achieved and the quality of education provided. The focus on raising standards is paying dividends with increasing rates of progress, particularly in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. The leadership recognises there is further work to be done to improve progress in Key Stage 4. The quality of subject leadership varies. Governors ensure the school fulfils its statutory duties.

Effective work has been done to oversee the modernisation of the buildings and improve the facilities, which are of a good or better standard.

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.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	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	3	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- As you know, inspectors visited your school recently. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found out. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. We welcomed your openness and honesty when answering our questions. What we liked about your school:
 - Your school is satisfactory and improving with some good and outstanding features.
 - In the past year there has been an increase in the rate of students' progress in the sixth form and in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3.
 - The numbers getting A*/A grades are steadily increasing and the upward movement must continue, particularly for those achieving the top A* grade.
 - Standards in modern foreign languages are not yet high enough. By the age of 16, English standards, including those in English literature, require improvement.
 - You told us you enjoy school and your attendance is outstanding. You have a real desire to succeed and your positive attitudes to learning will help you do so.
 - Relationships between students of different backgrounds are exemplary. You say you feel safe and secure and there is always someone to turn to if you have a concern.
 - The school council is making a difference and its views are listened to. The mentoring, fund raising and coaching that the oldest students do are first rate.
 - You have a wealth of additional activities that enrich the curriculum. Inspectors were pleased to hear that you value the many opportunities to participate in sport, musical and extra-curricular activities.
 - You take regular exercise and keep fit. It was pleasing to hear how well you are doing in competitive sports and that more and more of you are cycling to school. You are adopting healthy lifestyles, however, you are less keen to opt for the healthy options at lunchtime.
- What the school must do to improve further:
- Improve leadership, standards and students' progress in modern foreign languages.
 - Increase the rate of progress made between Years 9 and 11, particularly in English.
 - Improve the consistency and quality of teaching through better monitoring and evaluation, and by sharing the good practice that exists more widely.

We have asked your teachers to get even better at checking how well you are progressing as you move through the school.