



# Bramhall High School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 106139  
**Local Authority** Stockport  
**Inspection number** 287426  
**Inspection dates** 29–30 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Julie Price Grimshaw HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Seal Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Bramhall, Stockport
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Cheshire SK7 2JT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 4398045
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1488	<b>Fax number</b>	0161 4398951
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs M Gardner
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Peckham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 December 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–16	29–30 November 2006	287426

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Bramhall High School is a larger than average comprehensive school situated in an affluent part of Stockport. The school's population is largely White British, with very few students from minority ethnic groups. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. The school was awarded specialist science college status in September 2004 and is also a Department for Education and Skills designated Training School and Reed College of Enterprise.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Bramhall High School is a satisfactory school with a number of significant strengths. Standards attained at the end of Key Stage 4 are good and students make satisfactory progress overall. However, there is some underachievement, particularly in the case of middle and lower ability students.

Most students behave well both in the classroom and around school. However, inspectors agree with parents who expressed concern about the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority. The majority of students adopt a healthy lifestyle and are well informed about health-related issues. They make a positive contribution to the community, for example, through an impressive range of work carried out for various charities.

There is considerable variability in the quality of teaching and learning across subject areas. The school has some first-rate teachers, who regularly deliver outstanding lessons: in these, and other lessons which are good, students are enthusiastic about their learning, understand what is expected of them and make at least good progress. However, in a considerable proportion of lessons, teachers do not make their expectations clear and low-level disruption by a minority of students affects the overall quality of learning. In such lessons, students lack motivation and progress is too slow. The curriculum has recently undergone extensive revision and although it is too early to judge the impact of some initiatives, it is successful in meeting the needs of all learners. Students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the excellent range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in physical education (PE) and music: one student said, 'There's so many activities already, but they keep thinking of new things for us to do!'

The school cares for its students well. Pastoral care is particularly strong and vulnerable students are well provided for.

Overall, the quality of leadership and management, at all levels, is satisfactory.

School managers are caring and show a strong commitment to school improvement. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning across subject departments is currently too variable.

Although specialist college status has helped to improve some aspects of the school's work, there is currently no discernable impact on achievement and standards.

Adequate progress has been made on issues raised at the time of the previous inspection. The school provides satisfactory value for money and the capacity to make further improvements is sound.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of middle and lower ability students.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning so that it is at least good across all subject areas.
- Improve the behaviour and attitudes of a significant minority of students.

- Implement a consistent approach to monitoring the work of subject departments.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The standards of students when they enter the school are above average. Overall, students maintain those standards, which remain above the national average at the end of Year 11. Progress is satisfactory. The school is successful in attracting many high achieving students and many of these go on to gain good GCSE grades across a wide range of subjects. However, some of the middle to lower ability students are not making as much progress as they are able. In 2006, results in mathematics, English literature and one of the science courses were below expectation. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress due to the well managed and organised support. Many of these students are meeting the challenging targets they have been set.

In Key Stage 3 the school's own monitoring shows that students make good progress in Year 7, but that this falls away in the middle of the key stage. As a result, although standards at the end of Year 9 are high, overall achievement remains as satisfactory. This is one reason that the school has embarked on a revision of its curriculum for Key Stage 3 to improve the pace of learning, although it is too soon to judge the impact of this change on achievement. The school is setting challenging targets for students and subjects such as technology, science and Information and Communication Technology are using them well with students to raise their aspirations. Their wider use, however, is inconsistent across the school.

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

### **Grade: 3**

The personal development and well-being of students is satisfactory with some good features. Students are aware of the importance of healthy eating and many adopt active lifestyles through wide-ranging access to competitive sports and physical exercise. The school council take their responsibilities seriously and have recently been active in helping to redesign and make improvements to the school uniform. There are established and effective procedures for dealing with reported incidents of bullying.

The behaviour and attitudes of most students are good: they have a positive outlook and enjoy coming to school. However, the poor behaviour and attitudes of a significant minority of students occasionally hinder learning and low-level disruption in some lessons prevents students from making good progress. The number and regularity of fixed term exclusions is also relatively high. The effective promotion of high attendance has resulted in above average attendance figures over the past few years. However, punctuality at both the start of the day and between lessons is an issue for a minority of students.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. It is enhanced by some valuable educational visits that make a strong contribution to students' personal development.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is most effective in Years 10 and 11 although there is considerable inconsistency in quality: lessons range from outstanding to barely satisfactory. Technology, music, PE and drama are departments where outstanding teaching leads to excellent achievement. In contrast, there is evidence of underachievement in groups where teaching lacks challenge and students are unaware of how to improve.

Where there is outstanding practice teachers are secure in their subject knowledge, have high expectations, are enthusiastic and relate well with students. Lessons are very well planned, with much attention paid to catering for students' individual needs. Students respond by behaving very well and there is a good work ethos. Students following courses in technology, music and PE are challenged and supported by their teachers: high quality assessment ensures that they know exactly how to reach the next level. In good and very good lessons, teachers use effective strategies in managing students' behaviour, including maintaining a brisk pace, using praise and encouragement to motivate and keeping students on task. In lessons where the quality of teaching and learning is less than good, there is often a lack of clarity regarding lesson objectives and students are unaware of the level at which they are working. Such lessons are often teacher dominated and there is a lack of differentiated work to cater for the range of ability within the group. Inappropriate behaviour or low-level disruption is not always addressed.

The quality of marking is inconsistent. At best, it provides high quality detailed guidance, as seen in science. There are, however, instances where students work is rarely marked and there is insufficient guidance for improvement.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

A broad, balanced and innovative curriculum is thoughtfully planned and continuously revised. It meets statutory requirements and adds numerous extra learning opportunities to a busy 25-lesson week. The school's specialist status is reflected in diverse, well adapted science courses and extensive provision in information and communication technology. Tightly programmed personal, social and health education includes citizenship and is complemented by religious education. A start has been made in promoting accelerated progress in Key Stage 3, but it is too early to judge the impact of this. Some vulnerable Year 7 students benefit from intensive support in a separate Year 7 class. Elsewhere, carefully managed support ensures that all students are

included in every aspect of provision. In Key Stage 4 students benefit from a guided choice of academic, technological and vocational options, enhanced by links with local schools and colleges. These offer a close match with their preferences and post-16 aspirations. Students at risk of disaffection benefit from provision tailored to their needs including work related courses. Many students benefit from an excellent range of extra-curricular activities complementing the timetabled curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support to students are good. Effective child protection systems are in place and appropriate safety checks on new staff and visitors meet with the latest requirements. Health & safety, medical and accident reporting and recording systems are of a very high quality. School staff and a range of multi-agency professionals provide good levels of pastoral and emotional support to a number of vulnerable students and those identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The transitional arrangements for students entering Year 7 are very well managed by the school.

Although students are frequently given and utilise short-term targets for improving their work, they are not consistently aware of what they need to do to improve over time. The school operates a comprehensive programme of careers education, which supports students well.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher and other members of the school leadership group are committed to their roles and show genuine care for students' welfare. The quality of middle management, however, is too variable and although a number of subject leaders show exceptional skill in managing the work of their departments, others find this more challenging and require additional support. In particular, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently consistent, in terms of rigour and accuracy, across departments. In the main, the school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and priorities for development and evaluates whole-school outcomes with honesty, showing a commitment to improvement.

Governors fulfil all statutory responsibilities and are keen to assist school managers by exploring issues relating to the running of the school in detail.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### 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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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
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**

Following our visit to your school we would like to thank you for making us feel welcome and for sharing your views with us. We would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

We think that Bramhall High is a satisfactory school with some good features. We believe that the staff care about your personal development and are committed to supporting you during your time at school. There is a wide range of subjects and courses and this means that each one of you can follow a programme of study that suits you best. We were very impressed with the range of extra-curricular activities and pleased that so many of you make the most of this. Attendance is good, but we were a little concerned that some of you arrive late for some lessons. Most of you behaved well, both in lessons and around the school, but there are a small number of students who don't behave so well: for example, by talking too much in lessons and distracting others. This sometimes affects the progress made in lessons.

Overall, examination results are higher than the national average and some students achieve very good grades at GCSE. However, school managers feel that some students are not achieving as well as they are able. We agree with them and we've asked the school to consider ways in which this can be improved. You told us that you enjoy interesting and well-prepared lessons where you are encouraged to take an active part: lots of you mentioned technology, music, drama and physical education and we did see some excellent lessons in these subjects. We think that all of the teaching in your school is at least satisfactory, but we have asked the staff to think about how they can make further improvements so that all lessons are at least good.

You have an important part to play in improving your school further, by ensuring that all of you arrive on time for lessons and by making sure that you behave well, so that everyone can work hard and make good progress. We were pleased that so many of you were proud to be students at Bramhall High: we and your teachers want you to achieve your full potential and make the most of your time there.