



Boldon School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108730
Local Authority South Tyneside
Inspection number 288171
Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Margaret Farrow HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	New Road
School category	Community		Boldon Colliery, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	11–16		NE35 9DZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5362176
Number on roll (school)	1006	Fax number	0191 5374073
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Miss Joanne Bell
		Headteacher	Mr Colin Whitfield
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	23–24 January 2007	288171

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Boldon School is an average sized secondary school when compared to others nationally. The number of students on roll has fallen slightly since 2003. A higher and increasing proportion of students than that found nationally are entitled to free school meals and a lower proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of students with special educational needs is lower than the national average but has increased from 9.7% in 2006 to 14.7% in 2007. A very small number of students are looked after by the council. The school's accommodation was identified as an issue in the last inspection. The school moved into new purpose-built premises in November 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Boldon provides a satisfactory education for its students. The headteacher, senior leadership team, staff and governors share the ambition to improve standards and achievement across the school, following the disappointing examination results of students who left school at 16 in the summer of 2006. Standards reached by students at the end of Key Stage 3 were satisfactory; however, those attained at Key Stage 4 were unsatisfactory. The leadership team has taken the right steps to improve the quality of teaching and learning, assessment and target setting in order to secure improvement. It is too early to see the impact of the improvement strategies on examination results, but the tracking of pupil progress by departments and observation of lessons indicates that most students are now making at least satisfactory progress.

The headteacher has worked tirelessly for the past four years to secure the school's vision for a 21st century purpose-built school, that caters for the all round needs of its students and gives them the best possible start in life. The weaknesses linked to the poor accommodation in the previous school have been overcome. The school now has excellent facilities. Teachers are striving to engage with the modern technological aids in the new school to improve students' learning opportunities. These good resources together with the stronger focus on standards and achievement and secure relationships between the vast majority of staff and students, have supported well improvements in teaching, learning and the progress of the majority of students. Refinements in assessment, monitoring and evaluation of teaching by middle and senior managers, with support from national strategy consultants, has led to an increase in the proportion of good lessons. The majority of lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory and often good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. However, the Key Stage 4 curriculum currently lacks the flexibility to fully meet the individual needs and aspirations of all students.

The school provides good quality care and support for its students, particularly the most vulnerable, and there are extensive networks to help those who need support. The majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were very positive about the school and the quality of education and care provided. The school has satisfactory arrangements to communicate with parents and inform them of their children's progress and achievements. However, a minority of parents indicated they were unclear of the communication routes with the school. A significant minority of parents also perceive students' behaviour to be unsatisfactory. Recent improvements in behaviour management strategies and the move to the new school have resulted in good and improving behaviour by the majority of students both in lessons and around the school.

Although students are often provided with individual learning targets, they are not always used consistently to check students' progress. As a result, students are not always guided and challenged to achieve the best they can, particularly those of higher ability.

Governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors now provide effective challenge and support to the leadership team. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and provides adequate value for money.

Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, its performance in the standards attained by 16 year old students in 2006 was inadequate. Before its next Section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress that it has made in remedying this weakness. The school would receive 2 to 5 days notice of such a visit.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the headteacher, senior leadership team and staff maintain a relentless focus on raising attainment and achievement, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Improve the Key Stage 4 curriculum so that it more effectively meets the individual needs and aspirations of all students.
- Ensure information regarding the performance and progress of students is used to inform planning and setting of individual pupil targets so that all students can be challenged to achieve the best they can.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter school with average attainment. Standards attained by students in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 improved in 2006 and are now broadly average. Standards in English were well above average and in mathematics and science they were slightly below. The majority of students make satisfactory progress to the end of Key Stage 3 but the school is aware of the need to boost their progress in mathematics and science.

Overall standards of attainment of the 16 year olds fell in 2006. However, this masks some better performance, particularly in design and technology. In 2006, 47% of students gained five or more A* to C grades in their GCSEs. While this was below the national average, it was just below the school's own target of 49%. The percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C GCSEs including English and mathematics also fell and, at 34%, was well below the national average. The progress made by 16 year old students leaving school in 2006, showed only a slight improvement from 2005, when it was close to inadequate. The school has responded vigorously to this dip in performance and have set suitably ambitious targets for 2007. Departmental information on attainment, together with the progress seen in lessons during the inspection, indicates that students are now making expected progress towards these targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall, with some strengths. Students are proud of their new school and reflect sensibly on how the new accommodation, with its light and airy rooms, good resources and wide corridors, is helping to improve their behaviour, attitudes to and enjoyment of learning. They say they feel safe and secure and identify a range of people they can go to for support when needed. Effective and timely support for students at risk of exclusion has led to a low number of temporary exclusions and no permanent exclusions in the last 12 months. Students' moral and social development is good. Students are confident and display good social and communication skills, and are tolerant and respectful of each other. However, opportunities to enhance their spiritual and cultural awareness are limited. Students know what they need to do to be healthy. They speak positively about the healthy options in the school's bistro and many attend a range of out-of-school sporting activities as well as taking part in two hours of physical education each week. Students make positive contributions to their school and the wider community. Good examples are their work as peer mentors in school and their support for fundraising and local environmental projects, including designing a local skate-park and challenging anti-social behaviour.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned and provide a good structure to enable the majority of students to make progress. Learning objectives are on display in every lesson, but are not always shared meaningfully with students. The good and outstanding teaching and learning seen during the inspection were characterised by good relationships between teacher and students, the use of challenging questions and activities which enabled independent and collaborative working. There was also a brisk pace and the creative use of assessment to inform students' learning, involving students evaluating their own progress. In less effective lessons, teachers' questions often failed to engage students, the teacher talked for too long and students showed little excitement in learning. They remained unsure as to the standard of their work and how to move it on. In some lessons the work was not matched to the range of abilities, particularly for higher achieving students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The current curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs of the majority of students. The leadership team acknowledge that the new school environment provides a spur to devising more relevant, flexible courses that will go beyond the current broad and balanced GCSE range, but this is not yet the case. A focus on information and

communication technology (ICT) and the development of literacy skills supports all learners effectively. A well planned programme of careers education and work experience successfully helps prepare students for employment. The school works effectively with partners to provide experiences of future education and training, for example, visits to, and support from, local colleges, local firms supporting work-related and training courses, an Artist in Residence and the provision of Industry Days. Statutory requirements are now met in religious education. There is a coordinated tutorial programme planned for all years. One of the strengths of the curriculum, which enhances student learning and their life chances, is the well planned opportunities for Enterprise Education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and support provided to students by staff are good. The new building provides a safe and secure environment for staff and students alike. Child protection procedures and robust health and safety practices are in place. Provision for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties or disabilities is good, either in class or in the very good education support centre. Anti-bullying policies are effective and adhered to and students know that the few incidents of bullying are quickly addressed. A peer counselling programme operates successfully and there are effective links with local primary schools to help students make good transitions into the secondary school. Whilst students' progress is monitored effectively, not all staff use this information to ensure the full range of learners' needs are met within lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership team now provides a sharper and more secure focus on the achievement and progress of students and this is improving the learning of the majority of students in lessons. As a result of this and other actions recently taken by the school, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Accountability has been significantly strengthened and middle managers and the majority of staff are now more responsible for the work within their departments. Along with governors, staff are increasingly involved in the development of departmental as well as whole school improvement priorities and the school's self-evaluation process. As a result, all have a broadly accurate view of the school's performance; know the strengths and what needs to change to improve students' attainment and achievement. The senior leadership team has established a more robust approach to assuring the quality of teaching and learning through training and guidance linked to school priorities. This is valued by staff and is supporting improvements in the quality of teaching.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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

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

Boldon School

New Road

Boldon Colliery

Tyne and Wear

NE35 9DZ

23 January 2007

Dear students

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your new school. We enjoyed learning about the things you do in school and how well you are doing. The school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education with some good features. During our visit we found:

- most of you enjoy coming to your new school. You have positive attitudes to your class work and often work well in lessons
- you think the new school has lifted the atmosphere in school and the attitudes of other students and staff
- staff in school take good care of you and are there to help if you have a problem or need extra support
- the excellent facilities in the new school and improvements in how teachers plan and monitor how well you are doing is helping you to make better progress in lessons. This improvement follows some disappointing test and examination results in 2006
- some of your parents think that behaviour is a problem in school but we saw you behaving well in classes and around the school. We were particularly impressed with your good behaviour on the yard when the fire bell sounded, even though it was cold and some of you were missing your lunch
- you know how to be healthy and many of you take part in the sporting activities available and eat healthy meals at lunch times.

To help the school to improve further, we have asked your teachers to:

- take more account of your different abilities, so that each of you can work at a level that helps you to reach the highest standards possible
- provide a wider range of curriculum opportunities for you at Key Stage 4
- make sure the information and data they have about your achievements is used to set you challenging targets and help you make good progress in all lessons
- provide more opportunities to support your spiritual and cultural development.

Once again, thank you for your help. The team and I wish you every success in your new school and your future lives.

Margaret Farrow HMI

Lead Inspector