



Biddick Schools Sports College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108866
Local Authority Sunderland
Inspection number 288213
Inspection date 30 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	Biddick Lane
School category	Community		Washington, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	11–16		NE38 8AL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2193680
Number on roll (school)	1116	Fax number	0191 2193688
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Brian Rochester
		Headteacher	Mr Richard Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	30 January 2007	288213

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Biddick School is a large, popular and oversubscribed sports college serving mainly the community of Washington. The number of students on roll continues to rise. Nearly all students have English as their first language and come from White British backgrounds. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average as is the proportion of those entitled to free school meals. Eleven students are looked after by the council. The school first achieved specialist sports college status in 1997 and was redesignated for 4 more years in September 2004. It is part of a wider City of Sunderland federation of sports colleges. The school is accredited as an Investor in People and holds the Sportsmark Gold Award, the Artsmark Gold Award and the International School Award. The school is subject to proposals for rebuilding under the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Biddick is a good school with some outstanding features. The headteacher, senior managers and governors provide good and effective leadership and set an excellent vision for improvement. They are well supported by staff, parents and carers. The school places the achievement and well-being of students at the heart of its work. Inspectors agree with the school's shared statement of purpose; that 'Biddick is a safe place where we all work to promote and enjoy the highest individual achievement'. Despite some dips in performance in 2006, the school is on track to reach their challenging targets in 2007. Thorough analyses of data, monitoring and evaluation information to target improvement and tackle underachievement, have given the leadership team the confidence to know that this dip in performance was only temporary.

Students' standards and progress are generally good. Standards attained by vulnerable students, those who are looked after by the council and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are at least satisfactory and often good. They make good progress given their starting points, and in comparison with similar students in comparable schools. This is because of the inclusive nature of the provision and the good and targeted support and guidance they receive from teaching and non-teaching staff alike. The school's positive ethos and often very good relationships between staff and students help to ensure that students' attitudes to learning are good. Celebrating success and providing good support networks are cornerstones of the school's approach, building students' confidence, self-esteem and self-belief. As a result, students' personal development and well-being are good.

The care, guidance and support provided to students are excellent. Consequently the majority enjoy their education and achieve well. Great steps are taken to ensure that all students are included in the life of the school and there is an excellent range of out of school activities to meet individual interests and needs. A high proportion of students is regularly involved in the many sports and arts based activities which contribute to students' understanding of how to be healthy and live active lives well.

Teaching and learning are good and result in students' overall good progress in lessons. However, there is variability across departments in the quality of marking and the extent to which students are involved in assessing their own learning. Additionally, information on students' progress is not always used well enough by some teachers to ensure that activities are well matched to the needs of all students. As a result, work is sometimes not sufficiently challenging for all of them. Curriculum and other learning opportunities are outstanding. They meet the needs and interests of individual students and the employment and training needs in the local community very well. The school has taken innovative steps to broaden the Key Stage 4 curriculum by including vocational and work-based opportunities, providing a good choice of pathways into further learning and training. The skills centre set up in collaboration with other schools and colleges is to expand. Students who attend are very positive about the opportunities provided. Many achieve well and the attendance and attitudes of some have improved dramatically.

Excellent partnerships and relationships have been developed with agencies that support and work with the school. Specialist sport college status has extended the school's involvement with the wider community and many people use the school's facilities. It has provided improved opportunities for students to gain sports-based qualifications and develop healthy lifestyles and leadership skills through sport and other subjects within the school. These opportunities add considerably to students' personal development and prepare them well for their future lives.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the education and care their children receive. One parent wanted inspectors to know that the school was 'brilliant' in supporting her child with medical needs to take part fully in the life of the school. The school has developed many strategies to communicate with parents and takes their views and those of their children seriously. These are used to reflect on what the school is like and what needs to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' understanding of their own progress and what they need to do to take the next steps in learning.
- Improve the consistency and quality of marking.
- Ensure all students are sufficiently challenged in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' attainment on entry to the school is similar to that found nationally. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average in all core subjects. School data indicates that students' progress from entry into school to the end of Key Stage 3 has usually been good. In 2006 it was satisfactory, due mainly to a dip in students' attainment in English. The school met its 2006 targets in mathematics and science but missed the English target narrowly. Standards attained by students at the end of Key Stage 4 are good. The proportion achieving 5 or more A*-C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has been much higher than the national average for the past two years but in 2006 there was a disappointing fall in this figure. Nearly all students leave the school with a GCSE qualification or equivalent. The progress made by students from entering the school to leaving at 16 in 2006 was higher than the national average for the majority of students, and particularly good for lower ability boys and students with statements of special educational need.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The majority of students are enthusiastic learners and show pride in their school. They are tolerant and respectful of one another, adults and visitors to school. Many say they enjoy school. This is evidenced by the good attendance rates that are consistently higher than the national average. Behaviour is mainly good in the majority of lessons

and around the school. The school has developed good strategies to support students at risk of exclusion. As a result, there have been no permanent exclusions in the past three years and very few fixed-term exclusions. Students praise highly the tutorial system which provides excellent personalised academic and pastoral support. This programme builds students' confidence and self-esteem as well as enhancing their personal, social, moral and cultural development, which is good. Students report that bullying and racist incidents are unusual and when they occur, they are dealt with well by staff. Students know their opinions matter and some change happens as a result, for example the development of picnic tables in the school yard. Students make a good contribution to the wider community, for example through significant charity work, drama and dance shows and the annual party for senior citizens. Students value the Year 7 residential weekend in Langdale. They say it is great fun and helps to build their confidence, develop good relationships and sense of belonging in school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good relationships between most staff and students ensure a positive atmosphere that is conducive to learning in most lessons. There are many well focused professional development opportunities. These include staff working collaboratively to share best practice and undertake classroom-based research to support improvements. Lessons are well structured, learning objectives are clear and students understand what they need to do. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are secure and they take students through logical steps in learning. The school has developed secure systems for tracking students' progress, although this information is not always used well enough by all staff to ensure that learning activities in lessons are well matched to the needs of all students. Consequently, work is sometimes not sufficiently challenging. There is good practice in some subjects, where students regularly contribute to an assessment of their own learning, but this is not consistent across the school. The quality of marking is also inconsistent and students are not always given clear feedback on how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has a strong focus on developing students' basic skills in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT). Support programmes for reading and numeracy are effective in developing the skills of lower attaining students. Curriculum time allocated to mathematics and English is generous and in Key Stage 4, lower attaining students are provided with additional support such as corrective reading and numeracy and study plus, to improve the development of their basic skills. This has led to above average GCSE results including English and mathematics. The impact of the enhanced curriculum provision resulting from the schools' specialist

sports college status is immense and has a significant impact on students' personal development as well as their attainment and achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided to students are outstanding. A strong positive ethos of high expectation and achievement and mutual respect permeates the school. There are many strategies to meet the individual needs of students. These include peer mentoring, mentoring periods, student review days and learning mentor programmes. Students say they feel well cared for and supported in times of need. Good links have been developed with local primary schools, for example through sports, arts activities that support students' successful transition into the school. Outstanding partnerships with outside agencies support students who require additional help. Detailed data on students' attainment and progress is regularly reviewed to ensure that concerns about individual students are identified and acted upon quickly. Child protection procedures are robust and meet current statutory requirements and the school takes great steps to ensure effective risk assessments are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and continue to improve with a clear focus on student achievement and well-being. School self-evaluation procedures are thorough and accurate. They involve staff and governors alike. Departmental evaluations inform whole-school improvement priorities and staff and governors know the school's strengths and areas for development well. School improvement planning is effective, with a sharply focused set of priorities that are monitored and reviewed regularly. However, targets within the plan are not always as sharply focused. Leadership and accountability are well developed across all aspects of the school's work. Staff and middle leaders understand what is expected of them, feel empowered to take decisions and are accountable for the performance in their areas of responsibility. They value this. The governing body discharges its responsibilities well and provides a good balance of challenge and support. The school had only one key issue following the previous inspection and this has been addressed. It has not been complacent and has continued to strive to improve from its good baseline. As a result, standards have risen since the previous inspection. The school provides good value for money and has good capacity to continue to improve.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

The quality of provision

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

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Biddick School Sports College

Biddick Lane

Washington

Tyne and Wear

NE38 8AL

30 January 2007

Dear Students

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to some of you. I would also like you to thank all of the parents and carers who wrote to us; we had over 620 returned questionnaires. I was so pleased to see that the vast majority of parents and carers who responded think the school is well led and believe you enjoy school, are making good progress in your learning and are well cared for. Many of you also told us how you like your school and that adults help you when you need support and advice. We saw that almost all of you behave well and work hard. We think your school provides you with a good quality of education and some aspects are outstanding. We also found:

- your headteacher, senior teachers and governors provide good leadership. They and staff in school work hard to provide an atmosphere in which you feel respected and are encouraged to achieve well
- many of you attain good results in tests and examinations
- this is an inclusive school and the care provided by adults in school is excellent
- the quality of teaching in your school is often good
- relationships between teachers and yourselves are often very good, as are the relationships between the school and other agencies that work with it
- the range of subjects you can study is excellent and this has improved even further with the development of the skills centre
- you value highly the tutorial system
- there is an excellent range of after-school clubs and activities which many of you attend and enjoy, including the Year 7 residential weekend in Langdale
- many of you develop excellent leadership and support skills, for example through your work as mentors, modern foreign language leaders, maths leaders and dance and sports leaders.

We have asked the school to do three things to improve further:

- improve your understanding of your progress in lessons and what you need to do to take the next steps in learning
- improve the consistency and quality of marking
- ensure you are all sufficiently challenged in lessons.

Once again, thank you for welcoming us so well. I wish you all the best as you move through school and every success in your future lives.

Best wishes

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools