



# Ashton Park School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 109278  
**Local Authority** Bristol, City of  
**Inspection number** 288337  
**Inspection dates** 11–12 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Nick Green HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Blackmoors Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Bower Ashton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Bristol BS3 2JL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0117 3772777
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1201	<b>Fax number</b>	0117 3772778
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	222		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Vacant Position
		<b>Headteacher</b>	C C Gardner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 March 2003		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	11–12 October 2006	288337

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is larger than average in size. It has been a specialist sports college since 2002 and this is reflected strongly in many aspects of the school's curriculum and in its partnerships with the local community.

Most students are White British with a small number coming from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is around average although the overall economic background of students is below average. A significant proportion of the students come from areas where the educational background of adults is amongst the lowest in England. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is a little above average and the number of these with formal statements of special educational need is around the national average. Overall, students' attainment on entry to the school is below average.

Since 2004 the school has been the post 16 centre for South West Bristol and this has increased substantially the number of students in this age group at the school. The establishment of this facility and of other specialist accommodation has improved the quality of the school environment considerably in recent years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory, improving school with several good and some outstanding features. It faces many challenges, not least students' low attainment on entry, attitudes to learning of many and the limited value that many of them place on education.

The effective senior leadership team provides clear direction and empowers all staff to participate in identifying ways of improving the performance of the school. Accurate self-evaluation and successful implementation of a range of strategies allied to the significant beneficial impact of the school's specialist sports status have steadily improved students' achievements and well-being over recent years. The headteacher's clear vision, good leadership and devolved management style underpin the school's success.

For several years, the school has received more applications than it has places, demonstrating parents' confidence in it. They are overwhelmingly complimentary about the school, and as one parent wrote to inspectors 'the most important factor...has been the unstinting support, good humour, dedication and understanding of the staff...they make pupils feel valued'.

Standards in Year 11 and sixth form examinations in 2006 have continued the steady improving trend of recent years but remain below national averages. After a significant rise since 2001, results in Year 9 dropped in 2006 but this was because of a combination of factors peculiar to this year group, including a disproportionate number of boys with well below average attainment when they entered Year 7. Students' achievement and their progress from their low starting points on entry to the school and the sixth form are satisfactory.

Teaching is generally good but many students' learning is only satisfactory as they do not take a sufficiently active part in lessons or work independently enough, both in class and when completing the work they are set to do at home. The good curriculum, which caters well for the individual needs of students, particularly those with learning difficulties and the most able, acts as an effective safety net to ensure that all students make at least satisfactory progress. This year, the underachievement of girls has been eliminated, reflecting successful intervention strategies; there are pockets of excellence such as achievement in GCSE art and physical education.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school, are well behaved, adopt healthy lifestyles and feel safe. Attendance has improved, contributing to improving standards and achievement. Students make significant contributions to the local community and beyond, particularly through charity events and the opportunities for sports leadership. They develop good competence in workplace skills. The extensive programme of enrichment activities many supported by the schools specialist status is an outstanding feature of the school. It provides a good level of care, guidance and support for students, particularly for the most vulnerable and those with learning difficulties. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are robust. Academic guidance for students is satisfactory but they are not yet given enough

direction on what they need to do to improve their achievement, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

Students' standards are below average, reflecting their attainment on entry. Many make good progress because of the good teaching, exceptionally good care and guidance that they receive and an outstanding curriculum, but their progress is restricted by the limitations in many students' basic skills. The school recognises this and, in keeping with the policy of offering the best possible opportunities to all their students, it is putting in place more measures to support these students. The personal development and well-being of sixth form students are good.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. An outstanding feature is the way that equality of opportunity is promoted through a shared desire to do everything possible to improve standards and to help all the students develop academically and personally.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Refine teaching strategies to make sure that students take a more active part in their learning and develop their ability to work independently.
- Use information gathered from assessment more consistently across all subjects and ensure that all students know what they need to do to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Since 2001 standards at the end of Year 9 have risen steadily; in 2005 they were just below the national average and students' achievement was good. In 2006 they were lower and the school did not quite meet its challenging targets. This was in part as a result of the larger proportion than normal of boys with well below average attainment when they entered Year 7. Given the below average starting points of the students when they join the school, and the educational disadvantages that impede the learning of many of them, their progress and achievement are satisfactory. There are no significant differences between the performances of boys and girls or of any other groups of students at this age.

GCSE results have steadily improved over the last five years. There has been a rising trend in the number of students gaining five A\*–C grades, particularly those who choose to take both English and mathematics. The overall GCSE point score of students has risen considerably. This year, while the school was close to its challenging targets, standards remained below national averages. This reflected the fact that relatively few students reached the highest grades. In relation to their starting points, the achievement of the students at the end of Year 11 was satisfactory. In recent years,

girls have underachieved but this was eliminated in 2006. In GCSE art and physical education, students' achievement is outstanding, the latter reflecting the school's excellence in sport. In the sixth form, students' standards overall are below average, reflecting their attainment on entry. Many students make good progress, especially those with learning difficulties and disabilities, those on intermediate level 2 courses and higher attaining students on A level courses. However, students' progress overall is satisfactory because it is hampered for too many by their difficulties with literacy and numeracy, particularly on AS level courses.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students of all ages enjoy their education and are developing the personal skills and attributes of secure and considerate young people. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. From a low point in 2001, attendance has increased steadily as a result of the effective strategies employed by the school, and is now satisfactory. Students have good relationships with staff and their behaviour in class and around the school is good; a calm, respectful atmosphere prevails. Students and parents speak positively about the school as a safe place to be. They are confident that any instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students are aware of the need to eat well and stay healthy; a great many participate in sport and exercise.

Students make the most of the many opportunities open to them to contribute to the school and wider community, particularly through events organised by the sixth form social committee. As peer mentors, through supporting other students and as sports leaders they take a pride in working in their own school and in local primary schools. Through the school council, students have brought about changes in school uniform and meal menus. The contribution of students to charity fundraising is outstanding, particularly for the financing of a new school building and farm for their partner school in Kenya. Students develop good skills for their working life through diverse curriculum opportunities and the open access policy to further study in the sixth form.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching is generally good but not yet good enough to overcome the passivity of many students in their learning and their inability to work independently. Most lessons are planned well and teachers display good subject knowledge; many use a wide variety of strategies and resources and set an appropriate level of challenge. Learning objectives are consistently shared with students and, where teaching is most effective, these are framed as outcomes and provide a good basis for assessment of progress.

Students are cooperative in lessons and teachers establish a productive working atmosphere. However, many middle attaining students do not acknowledge the relevance and importance of academic success and consequently do not achieve their full potential.

There is some good and outstanding post-16 teaching where the pace and variety of activities draw the students into an active engagement with the subject and they achieve well. However, in some lessons, students are not sufficiently engaged and are passive recipients of information and opinions.

The use of assessment for learning is beginning to improve students' capacity to think better and work independently. Good target-setting procedures and use of assessment data enable students' progress to be tracked well, helping teachers plan effectively for improvement. Students are clear about what targets they are aiming for but less clear about the steps they need to take to get there. Although marking is regular, there is little written feedback given to students on how to improve. The ends of lessons do not always include activities that give students an opportunity to actively demonstrate what they have learned.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school's curriculum is successful in meeting the needs and interests of all students. Statutory requirements are fulfilled except for a daily collective act of worship. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and revised in response to identified areas for improvement. For example, in Year 7, students are thoroughly enjoying the new 'Opening Minds' project and benefiting from the opportunities it provides to learn independently or, as one student put it, 'to use our brains and be creative'.

In Years 10 and 11, the school offers three pathways to post-16 study or employment. Each has a different balance of vocational and academic subjects, including good provision for work-related learning, and effectively enables all groups of students to progress and develop. In the sixth form, there is a very wide range of AS and A level courses, vocational courses and courses in basic skills for those who need further study before embarking on sixth form courses. This breadth of choice, which caters very well for the full range of students' needs, is an outstanding feature of the school's curriculum.

The school makes good provision for the development of literacy; intervention strategies and reduced class sizes have benefited those who enter the school with weaker skills. Opportunities for developing numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across other subjects are not yet as systematically planned. Effective careers advice and work experience provide good preparation for students' future economic well-being. The recent inclusion of additional enterprise activities is further strengthening this area.

Students greatly appreciate the outstanding enrichment programme the school offers through sport, performance and creative arts. Participation is high across all years,

and contributes significantly to students' enjoyment of school and their personal development. The school's specialist status in sports is used to raise students' achievement, self-esteem and aspirations across the curriculum. Programmes and opportunities are specifically tailored for differing students' abilities. This has a very positive impact on the development of students' leadership skills.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Staff know students very well and provide a high level of care throughout the school. Child protection arrangements are robust, as are health and safety procedures. Effective steps are taken to promote personal development and well-being. The school's responsiveness to the needs of individual students is good and is praised by both parents and students. Intervention strategies are comprehensive and use a wide range of specialists to support vulnerable students as well as those with learning difficulties, disabilities and behavioural issues. As a result, there are many success stories of students, particularly those in the sixth form, who have made progress despite challenging circumstances.

Clear academic guidance is provided for students in Years 10 and 11 through target setting, reviews and meetings; however, this is less developed in the lower school where group tutors are not as involved. The guidance given to sixth form students to help them track their progress is very effective and a key factor in their levels of achievement. The academic support given to students throughout the school is good and extra facilities such as the Year 11 'catch-up' club are both popular and beneficial.

Personal, social and health education is well organised and proficiently delivered. Students make good use of the range of external support workers who provide counselling on a variety of issues. Advice on careers and courses is thorough and enables students to make informed choices for the future.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The headteacher and effective senior leadership team provide clear vision and direction for the school. This is focused on raising achievement and on the strong promotion of the personal development and well-being of the students. The senior leaders provide opportunities for all staff to contribute to identifying strategies for improving the performance of the school. This has created a common sense of purpose in meeting the challenging needs of many students. Good integrated care, guidance and support, and steady improvement in students' achievements, have resulted from this.

Effective quality assurance procedures, including systematic observation of lessons, are used to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Self-evaluation



procedures accurately evaluate the quality of all aspects of the school's performance and have led to the current initiatives to improve students' learning. Teachers are being given good guidance and support to develop their skills and to improve their use of assessment to aid students' learning. Performance data are used very well to track the progress of students and set targets for their improvement.

Central to the leaders' and managers' well-considered school development plan is the goal to provide equality of opportunity for all students to help them improve their learning skills. However, there is still more to be done to ensure all students achieve as well as they can by improving their attitudes to work and the value they place on education. The good features of the school's leadership and management and its progress in raising students' achievement over recent years demonstrate that it has the capacity to make the improvements needed.

The school's resources are deployed very well to achieve good value for money. The improvements made to the school's accommodation have been managed very effectively. Governors are highly committed and very supportive. They are knowledgeable about the school's performance and aware of the need to improve the pace of students' achievement. They have provided suitable challenge to the school's leaders to bring about improvements.



## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### 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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	1
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	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	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>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	1
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	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**

Thank you for the help you provided to the inspection team when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting members of year groups and we learned a great deal from our discussions with many of you in lessons and around the school.

Your school has some good and outstanding features and overall provides you with a satisfactory education. The range of activities arising from its specialist sports status has a significant, beneficial impact on many aspects of your school life. Overall, test and examination results have risen steadily over several years although there was a drop in Year 9 in 2006 and standards remain below national averages. Your achievement and progress from your starting points on entry to the school and the sixth form are satisfactory. Girls have made most improvement recently. There are pockets of excellence such as achievement in GCSE physical education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Although teaching is often good, we feel that you could play a more active part in your learning and work more independently. We also feel that you could be given more guidance from teachers on how to improve your work.

Your parents think very highly of the way the school fosters your personal development and well-being through the good care, guidance and support it provides for you, and inspectors agree. You say that you enjoy school and you clearly show pride in your roles as peer mentors and sports leaders and the contributions that you make to the local community and your partner school in Kenya. We are glad to see that your attendance has improved and that you behave so well. The school offers you a varied curriculum that meets your different needs and interests very well and in the sixth form this is outstanding. The range of enrichment activities provided contributes significantly to your enjoyment of school and your personal development; again in the sixth form this is outstanding.

The senior teachers' effective leadership and management are key to the school's growing success; the headteacher's strong commitment, clear vision and proficient management underpin this. You can really help by improving your attitudes to study. Best wishes with your studies.