



Bedminster Down School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 109283
Local Authority Bristol, City of
Inspection number 288339
Inspection dates 27–28 September 2006
Reporting inspector Nick Green HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Donald Road
School category	Community		Bedminster Down
Age range of pupils	11–16		Bristol BS13 7DQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0117 3532800
Number on roll (school)	991	Fax number	0117 3532811
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Richard Bevan
		Headteacher	Marius Frank
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	27–28 September 2006	288339

Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

© 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 HMI and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is average in size. It has had specialist technology status since 2004 which is beginning to be reflected in its curriculum and in its partnership with local primary schools. Most students are White British with a small number coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is just below average and the overall economic background of students is broadly average. However, over three quarters of the students come from areas where the educational background of adults is amongst the lowest in England. The percentage of students with special educational needs is a little above average, though the proportion with formal statements is half the national average. In recent years, the school has been designated as facing challenging circumstances, which reflects the social and educational deprivation within its catchment area. Students' attainment on entry to the school is generally below average, though it is gradually improving.

Earlier this year, students moved from poor quality accommodation to a newly built school on the same site.

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 an improving school that judges its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory, and inspectors agree. It faces many challenges, not least students' attitudes to learning and the low value that many of them place on education. Accurate self-evaluation and successful implementation of a range of strategies have improved students' achievements significantly. The headteacher's good leadership is the key to the school's improvement. His clear direction and promotion of students' well-being have inspired the staff at all levels to raise the performance of the school. Standards in test and examination results this year are much better than in 2005 but remain well below national averages. Students' achievement and their progress from their low starting points on entry to the school are satisfactory. Most of the pockets of underachievement in 2005 have been eliminated, reflecting improvements in attendance and teaching. A lack of top levels in Year 9 tests and in GCSE grades is due partly to the lack of challenge for the brightest students.

The personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory. They generally behave well, adopt healthy lifestyles, feel safe and enjoy school. The new accommodation has given them an increased pride in the school. They make suitable contributions to the community and develop competence in workplace skills, though confidence in exercising responsibility and showing initiative are more limited.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Planning of schemes of work and lessons has improved over recent years, as has the use of assessment to aid learning. There are still inconsistencies in marking and not all students are set sufficient homework to help them develop their ability to work independently. The curriculum is varied in Years 10 and 11 and successful in meeting the needs of all students, though information and communication technology does not have the prominence expected in a specialist school. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory but does not fully enrich all students' enjoyment and achievement, particularly the most able.

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for students. The quality of care is high, particularly for the most vulnerable and those with learning difficulties, who receive effective support to help them progress and achieve. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are robust. As a result of a tough approach to behaviour management, the number of fixed term exclusions is too high, though this is being suitably addressed. Students' academic progress is tracked well and they are set appropriate targets for improvement. However, not all students are given sufficiently clear guidance on how to achieve them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that students take a more active part in their learning, both in class and in work they are set to do at home.
- Ensure that targets are made clear to all students so that they know better what they should be aiming at and how to attain them.

- Raise the attainment of the most able students by increasing the level of challenge in their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school has been successful in raising the standards and achievement of students at the end of Year 9 after several years of poor results. In this year's tests, students' scores improved considerably, with the proportion of students reaching Level 5 or above moving much closer to the national average. The school broadly met its challenging targets in 2006, including those set to reflect its specialist technology status. However, standards remain below average overall, chiefly because the numbers of students reaching the higher levels are much lower than those attained nationally. Given the below average starting points of the students when they joined the school, and the educational disadvantages that impede the learning of many of them, their progress and achievement are good. GCSE results have steadily improved since the time of the previous inspection, though they dropped back in 2005. This year, they picked up again and were the best the school has ever achieved. While the school was close to its targets, standards remained exceptionally low compared with national averages. This also reflected the relatively fewer students who reached the highest grades. In relation to their starting points, the achievement of the pupils at the end of Year 11 was satisfactory. In 2005, there was substantial underachievement in English by girls and by many of the students with needs identified by the school. This has largely been eradicated.

The better outcomes in 2006 reflect the success of the many initiatives to improve standards and achievement initiated by the senior leaders and managers, including the raising of attendance and improved teaching. The lack of the highest results at both key stages is because the school does not sufficiently stretch its relatively few more able students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' are acquiring suitable personal skills and attributes to help them develop into secure and considerate young people. They are safety conscious and are well informed about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. The good range of healthy options in the school's lunch menus enables them to eat well and many engage in after school opportunities for sport and exercise.

Most students enjoy school and feel they are taught well. They appreciate the good opportunities for learning provided by the resources in the new school building, which they treat with great care. From a low point at the time of the last inspection, attendance has increased steadily as a result of the effective strategies employed by the school, and is now satisfactory. The behaviour of students in class and around the school is generally satisfactory and often good. Students feel safe in the school and,

when needed, take advantage of the staff they can go to if unhappy or troubled. Students feel that incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. These positive features have contributed to the rising level of students' achievement.

The school council gives students opportunities to make contributions to school life, such as suggestions for aspects of the design of the new school. Students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is satisfactory. They make suitable contributions to the community, for example, through sports activities with local primary schools. Students are improving their levels of competence in the workplace skills needed for their future economic well-being, though many lack confidence in exercising responsibility and taking initiative.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Students make satisfactory progress and show satisfactory attitudes to their work as a result of generally effective and often good teaching. Teachers plan and structure lessons well and students know what they are meant to be learning. Lessons are well paced and enhanced by the use of information and communication technology resources. Teachers exhibit enthusiasm which they pass on to students. Relationships between teachers and students are positive and in most lessons a productive working atmosphere is established. As some Year 10 pupils say, the school provides 'great opportunities to learn - it's fun, exciting.'

Most lessons meet the needs of all students and the majority are very willing to learn, and listen attentively. Poor behaviour is rare but some pupils are spectators and do not take a sufficiently active part in their learning. For some students, homework is not set often enough and this restricts them developing the skills to learn independently. Through well directed questions and accurate marking, teachers show students how to improve their work to reach the next level or grade. Students assess their own and each other's work and share ideas readily. However, some pupils are unsure about their targets and in weaker lessons marking does not always clarify how they can improve. The work and targets set for the most able students does not always stretch them sufficiently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provided by the school generally serves all students well. Statutory requirements are met, except for a daily collective act of worship. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is carefully planned to build on the work students do in their primary schools. In many subjects, students use information and communication technology (ICT) but too little time is given to discrete teaching of ICT skills.

In Years 10 and 11, the school offers three different 'learning pathways' with different balances of vocational and academic subjects including good provision for work-related

learning. These effectively meet the needs of all groups of students and have led to increased motivation and attendance. Unusually for a specialist technology school, more able students in Years 10 and 11 currently have no opportunity to take information and communication technology examinations.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) of students is satisfactorily covered from Year 7. In Years 10 and 11, a newly introduced personal development curriculum offers opportunities for students to gain extra qualifications through participation in a variety of tasks that suitably develop their knowledge and understanding of, and skills in, active citizenship, health and safety, and enterprise.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are helped to progress and develop well through good individual education plans. Beneficial initiatives to develop pupils' self-confidence and skills have been implemented, for example, the underachievement of girls is being addressed by making links with female mentors in business, to extend students' horizons. The number and range of extra-curricular activities are satisfactory, though the extent to which they contribute to enriching students' enjoyment and achievement is limited for some, particularly the most able.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good quality care is provided for students. Effective procedures are in place to promote personal development and well-being, notably to encourage students to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Arrangements safeguarding students are implemented well and there is good attention to risk assessments.

Staff are committed to ensuring the needs of all students are identified and met. The school has sought and achieved the local authority's inclusion standard. Vulnerable students and those with special learning needs are given good support. Parents are kept well informed and staff work effectively with them and external agencies to ensure students make satisfactory progress.

A range of measures is taken to counter bullying and provide support for troubled students. The recent high number of fixed term exclusions for inappropriate behaviour reflects the firm stance that senior managers take to ensure students' safety but this extreme sanction has been used too readily. They recognize this and are currently improving the means by which they manage and promote good behaviour to reduce the need to exclude students.

The effectiveness of the PSHE programme to provide advice and guidance varies, as does the quality of tutor group sessions which are not always sufficiently purposeful. Students' academic progress is carefully monitored and they are kept well informed about their achievements and areas for improvement. They receive sound guidance on course options and careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides clear vision and direction for the school that is focused firmly on raising achievement and promoting the well-being of students. He has clearly analysed the weaknesses in the school's performance and developed suitable strategies to address them. In conjunction with the senior leadership team, he has created a common sense of purpose among staff in meeting the challenging circumstances the school faces. While advances have been gradual, the impact of this proficient leadership and management has resulted in significant improvements in the achievement of students this year. Staff share and support the headteacher's drive for raising standards. Effective procedures are used to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Extensive, systematic observation of lessons is undertaken. Senior leaders provide valuable guidance and support to improve planning, enhance teaching and to promote the use of assessment to distinguish students' learning needs. Performance data is used very well to track the progress of students and to identify those who are underachieving.

Self-evaluation procedures take good account of the views of pupils, staff, parents and the local authority; they accurately evaluate strengths and areas for development. The promotion of equality of opportunity and combating discrimination are central to the leaders' and managers' vision. They are generally effective in pursuing this, though there is still more to be done to improve students' attitudes to work and to increase the value they place on education to ensure they all achieve as well as they can. The school's recent successes show it has good capacity to make further improvement in this respect.

The school's resources are deployed satisfactorily. The overseeing of the building of the new school and the transition to it has been managed very effectively. Governors are committed and supportive and are aware of the need to improve pupils' achievement. However, they do not always challenge the school's leaders sufficiently to increase the pace of improvement.

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

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

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?	3
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?	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	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	3

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	2
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	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

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.

Overall, the school provides you with a satisfactory education. Your test and examination results this year are much better than in 2005 but standards remain well below average. However, compared with your starting points when you begin school, your progress and achievement is satisfactory. Girls and some of you who find learning difficult have made most improvement recently. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and often good, though we feel you could be set more homework and the helpfulness of the comments you receive from teachers on how to improve your work could be more consistent. We also feel that you could be stretched more, particularly those of you who are capable of achieving higher results.

The school fosters your personal development and well-being through the good care and the satisfactory support and guidance it provides for you. You say that you enjoy coming to school and you clearly show pride in, and are looking after, your impressive new school building. We are glad to see that your attendance has improved steadily over the last few years and that you generally behave well. You make suitable contributions to the community and are developing skills to use when you begin work. However, you need to display more confidence in taking responsibility and showing initiative, particularly in becoming more active in your learning and appreciating the value of education. The school offers you a varied curriculum and it meets your different needs and interests well. The range of extra-curricular activities on offer to you is satisfactory.

Your headteacher's good leadership is the key to the school's growing success. His clear direction and promotion of your well-being have inspired the staff at all levels to raise the performance of the school and to improve your achievement. We have recommended that more attention is given to the areas for improvement in your work and attitudes outlined in this letter.