



Buxton Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112970
Local Authority DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number 289475
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Sue Harrison HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	College Road
School category	Foundation		Buxton
Age range of pupils	11–18		Derbyshire SK17 9EA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01298 23122
Number on roll (school)	1182	Fax number	01298 27578
Number on roll (6th form)	198		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs.Sue Kardahji
		Headteacher	Mr. Alan Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	20–21 September 2006	289475

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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

This is the main secondary school for the town, with an intake across the whole ability range. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is slightly above average. Buxton Community School has specialist sports status, with outdoor activities and leadership courses as a strong feature. From September 2006 the school is running a Young Apprentice Programme for sports and leadership. The school is working with providers of further education to offer vocational courses. The school's sports facilities are used by the wider community and the local authority runs adult education courses on the site. Almost all the students are from white British backgrounds but there are some recent arrivals from Bulgaria, Poland and France.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school has made significant improvement in recent years and now provides a good quality of education. The majority of parents are very supportive of the school. The following comment from a parent sums up some of the positive features: 'the enthusiasm of teachers, the knowledge of individual pupils and the encouragement of all talents and celebration of a wide range of achievements'. A minority of parents feel that behaviour could be improved but behaviour in the school is generally good. Pupils, particularly the older ones in the sixth form, speak about the improvements that have taken place in the school, both in terms of examination results and resources. The leadership and management team is effective in focusing on areas of underperformance and taking action to drive up standards. This has led to improvements, for example in the core subjects and in the performance of boys. Teachers and other staff are dedicated to getting the best out of the pupils. Most lessons are very well planned, start promptly and quickly engage the interest of the pupils. A few rely too heavily on teaching the whole class rather than meeting the needs of individuals. Some marking of pupils' work is very thorough but this is not consistent throughout the school. The school has benefited from its specialist sports status in a number of ways. Facilities for sporting and other activities, such as dance, are very good, and a large proportion of pupils engage in activities outside lessons. This has fostered a culture of teamwork and has built up pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The impact of this can be seen in lessons across the whole school. The school has many systems for supporting and encouraging pupils and for imposing sanctions when needed. There is a particularly effective method of ensuring form teachers get information on a daily basis about how their pupils performed in each lesson the previous day. This enables action to be taken quickly where necessary, and good effort to be rewarded. A lot of work has gone into developing the curriculum to respond to changing needs but the requirement for Citizenship to be delivered across the school is not yet fully in place. Some of the classrooms and general areas are in need of refurbishment and there are a few areas where the standard of cleanliness is not satisfactory. Effective leadership, enthusiastic teachers and support staff and good systems for monitoring progress have led to improvements in examination results, which are now above the national average at Key Stage 3 and similar to the national average at GCSE. The standard of pupils' work is satisfactory overall and good in some subjects. This represents good progress and achievement for the majority of students when seen in the context of their starting points.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. Pupils make good progress because teaching is effective at helping them to become independent learners. A minority of teaching is less effective and examination results were below the national average in a small number of subjects in 2006. In most subjects pupils learn the study skills they need to be successful at this level. Their progress is monitored carefully and

there are good support systems in place to give them extra help when needed. In addition to their main subjects, they participate in a wide range of activities that help them to develop skills, such as leadership and teamwork. The school has used its sports specialism well to develop some of these opportunities. Sixth formers also run a number of non-sporting clubs in school. There is a wide range of courses for them to choose from at advanced level. The school offers a programme for those not yet ready for advanced work but take up of this is low. The school provides pupils with opportunities to find out about further education courses elsewhere and is working in partnership with other organisations to develop the vocational opportunities available to school leavers in Buxton. Pupils enjoy sixth form work and make the most of their new study centre, which is well equipped with computers. Enrolment to the sixth form is growing and very few pupils drop out of courses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the marking of pupils' work is consistent in helping them to know what to do to improve further - Ensure pupils receive their entitlement to a programme of Citizenship education - Improve standards of accommodation and cleanliness in some areas of the school

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. They enter the school with a wide range of starting points but with fewer at the upper end of attainment than is found nationally at the start of Year 7. The standard of their work is satisfactory overall and good in some subjects. Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are improving and were above the national average in 2006. GCSE results are also improving, including in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A* - C in 2006 was in line with the national average. Taking into account all the contextual factors in their starting points, this represents good progress for the majority of pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as their second language. Although the performance of girls is still slightly better than that of boys, significant improvement has been made to close the gap since the last inspection. In the sixth form, pupils start advanced courses with attainment that is broadly average. Results of advanced courses were above average in 2005 and remained so in 2006. Pupils' progress and achievement in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE are good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors and well behaved in lessons. Pupils feel safe and secure in the school. Rare incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Younger pupils appreciate the value of the Year 11 helpers, peer mentors and the school counsellor. The Year 7 common room gives the opportunity to make new friends in a safe environment. The school has good links with outside agencies involved in pupil support. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' feedback from 'special days' devoted to topics such as racial equality is very positive and they enjoy learning about world faiths in their religious education lessons. Promotion of a healthy life style is developing well and the school is working towards the 'healthy school award'. The designation as a specialist sports college is having a positive impact in extending opportunities for physical activity and the majority of pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities. The contribution that the school makes to the community is good and the pupils' charity committee raises large amounts of money. The school has adopted a Kenyan school as a charity project and raised significant sums of money to support the school. There is a well organised work experience programme and the school is developing a range of enterprise activities to help pupils gain work-related skills. Attendance rates are improving and are in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school judges the quality of its teaching and learning to be good and inspection evidence confirms this. Teachers show a real commitment to helping pupils to progress. Notable strengths in the teaching include teachers' good command of their subjects, their preparation of well-planned lessons and, not least, their high expectations of pupils. This means that pupils enjoy lessons and teachers use this positive attitude to establish productive relationships which encourage and motivate pupils to work with enthusiasm and care. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good it is generally because the work involves pupils less or does not address their individual needs. In many lessons pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and check how they are progressing by becoming more aware of their targets and finding out what they have to do to make their work better. However, there is inconsistency in the marking of pupils' work. Some marking is detailed and good advice for improvement is given but sometimes the marking is superficial. Pupils who have learning difficulties generally perform well because their needs are well known to their teachers, the work set is at an appropriate level and they receive effective support from classroom assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good, being broad and balanced whilst reflecting the school's status as a sports college. Pupils understand the importance of the sports development and the benefits it has brought, not just in terms of better facilities but in the range and value of additional opportunities it provides. In addition, the specialism has contributed to improving the school's overall performance by fostering a positive attitude to school and raising the self-esteem of pupils. There is a developing provision for Key Stage 4 and sixth form pupils to select vocational courses, taking advantage of links with providers outside the school. A very wide range of enrichment activities is offered; these activities are valued by the pupils and many participate in them. This programme makes an important contribution to developing team work and helping pupils mature into responsible adults. However, the school does not ensure that the statutory requirements for Citizenship are being met across the curriculum. The Alternative Curriculum for pupils who have learning difficulties is well thought out and positively received by pupils and they make good progress. There is good provision for information and communication technology.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. All requirements for child protection are in place; members of staff are aware of the required procedures and follow them accordingly. Relationships are good and pupils find teachers helpful and ready to offer additional support. Staff have high expectations for the quality of pupils' work as well as looking after pupils' health and safety. Year 7 pupils settle quickly within the school. The alternative Year 7 curriculum provides good support for pupils with additional needs by raising their self-esteem, thus making their progress greater than might otherwise be expected. The inclusion support centre helps pupils improve their behaviour. Individual behaviour plans are in place and this has significantly reduced the number of exclusions and improved work in lessons. The full time counsellor provides additional support and also trains pupil mentors. Pupils whose first language is not English receive effective support to help them progress well. Systems are in place to make sure that all staff are well informed of how pupils are behaving and progressing. The 'pupil information notes' ensure that form tutors know what is happening in all subjects. This allows tutors to give praise to pupils on a daily basis or take action when problems arise. Tracking reports are sent home three times a year; some parents would like further communication about their child's progress, for example more teacher comments in the pupils' diaries. Careers education and guidance are good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that leadership and management are good. The headteacher has led a programme of improvement activities which have impacted positively on the behaviour and achievements of pupils. He has a very clear sense of purpose and high expectations for the school's future development. The headteacher receives a high level of commitment from staff and able support from senior leaders, who play an effective role in school improvement. Regular and rigorous evaluation by senior leaders helps them to form an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school's provision. This leads to a focus on particular subjects or areas of the school where there is underachievement. Actions taken have led to improvement, for example in the core subjects. The leadership and management by middle managers are good. Comprehensive departmental reviews contribute well to school evaluation. Effective use is made of assessment data to track the progress of students against their targets and to guide curriculum planning. Staff development is valued and used effectively to improve the quality of leadership and of teaching. School governance is good. Governors are strong 'critical friends' and they set a strategic direction which has standards and achievement, in addition to the welfare of students, at its core. They have worked particularly well with the headteacher and senior leaders in managing school improvement. Resources are well managed but the general condition of some accommodation and the cleanliness of some areas of the school is unsatisfactory. Pupils mentioned in particular they were not happy with the cleanliness of the toilets in the school. Financial planning is exemplary and is securely based upon the plans for further development of the school. The school provides good value for money and its capacity for improvement is good.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	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	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
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

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

22 September 2006 Dear Pupils Buxton Community School, College Road, Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 9EA. As you know, a group of inspectors recently visited your school. Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us and your help in finding our way around and giving us your views about the school. We really enjoyed visiting your school. I am writing now to tell you about our findings. We judge Buxton Community School to be a good school. Teachers have high expectations of what you can achieve. Most lessons are well planned to be interesting and challenging. Younger pupils told us about how they are helped to settle quickly into the school by staff and by older pupils. We think it is good that form teachers know how you are doing on a daily basis and we saw how that leads to praise where it is due and action to address problems when they arise. The school is working hard to help people manage their behaviour and the majority of pupils behave well. There are lots of ways you can get extra help when needed and we know many of you appreciate this. We were impressed by how many of you get involved in activities outside lessons. We think the sports specialism has helped the school in a number of ways and it was good to see some of the new facilities you have. Sixth formers can see how the school has improved in recent years and they appreciate their new study centre. Examination results are improving, they are at or above national averages and we judge that the majority of pupils make good progress against their starting points. We think the school is well led and managed and that it is continually striving to get better. We have asked the headteacher to take action on three things: the variation in the way your work is marked, the need to make sure you receive your full entitlement to a Citizenship programme, and the standard of accommodation and cleanliness in parts of the building. We wish you all well with your future studies. Sue Harrison HMI