

Belper School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112989
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number	289483
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Judith Matharu HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1275
6th form	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Birkinshaw
Headteacher	Mr T Harding
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003
School address	John O' Gaunts Way Belper Derbyshire DE56 1RZ
Telephone number	01773 825281
Fax number	01773 820875

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Inspection number	289483

© Crown copyright 2007

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Belper School is a larger than average secondary school. It serves the town of Belper and surrounding villages. Students' attainment on entry is broadly average. The number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. Most students are of White British origin. The school gained specialist Technology status in 1994. It was also awarded the Artsmark Silver Award in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Belper is a good school which meets the need of students well. Good relationships are a strength of the school. The ethos is centred on caring for students, and supporting them to develop into well-rounded, independent individuals. This effectively underpins the school's daily practice. The school provides good value for money.

Standards are above average at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Students make good progress from broadly average attainment on entry. The Key Stage 4 results of 2006 showed that whilst girls made very good progress, boys, particularly those of below average ability, made satisfactory progress from Key Stages 3 to 4. This prompted an analysis of the contributory factors, and a suitable intervention strategy was implemented. This is bringing about improved progress for the current Year 11 students. Careful monitoring of these students suggests that the school is back on track to achieve more equitable results for both sexes in 2007. Lesson observations and examination of students' work during inspection confirms this.

The personal development and well being of students is good and is a strength of the school. Students display confidence and considerable self-assurance, indicating that they largely enjoy school and appreciate being able to contribute strongly to many aspects of school life. In particular, they feel they have a strong voice and that they are listened to. Most parents are satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. A minority of parents, however, indicates that they would like to be consulted more often over school issues.

Teaching and learning are good, with some outstanding features. At best teaching is well-planned and precise, closely matched to students' needs and challenging of all abilities and aptitudes. However, where teaching is satisfactory, the pace is less brisk and lessons lack suitable challenge for all students. Feedback to students and the marking of work is very detailed and useful in some subjects, but this is not consistent across the school.

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of students well throughout the school. It has been significantly enhanced through Technology status including vocational courses and creative technology courses within the arts. Pastoral care and the welfare of students are good. Students are well known and there are clear procedures in place to safeguard them and ensure their wellbeing. Academic guidance is less strong. Although there are some examples of excellent tracking of performance which leads to timely interventions, this is not consistent across the school.

Leadership and management are good. The school's ability to judge its own strengths and areas for development is robust. The headteacher and senior leadership team have established a clear vision for the school. This is focused on improving teaching and learning to raise achievement, particularly the achievement of boys to match that of the girls. Middle leaders, such as heads of subjects have a shared understanding of the school's priorities and contribute well to school improvement. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the capacity to improve further is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Effectiveness is good. Students say they enjoy their sixth form experience. Their personal development is good, and the vast majority makes valuable contributions to the main school community. Teaching is good and students achieve well to gain slightly above average GCE AS

and A-level results and above average results on advanced and intermediate vocational courses. The vast majority completes the courses they begin and most continue to higher education. The curriculum provides a good range of courses for all abilities and good enrichment opportunities, with the exception of timetabled physical activities. The support and guidance students receive help them make both good progress and informed choices for the future. The sixth form is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Expand the range of strategies to support boys to achieve consistently good progress at Key Stage 4.
- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that tasks are consistently matched to students' needs
 - improving the quality of marking and feedback, including targets, for students to match the best practice in school
 - ensuring there is consistency in the use of assessment data to track progress across all subjects, to inform teaching and learning and identify where interventions might be made.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' achievement is good. They gain above average results in the Year 9 national tests. Targets are reached.

Results in GCSE examinations are above average. In 2006, the school attained its best ever result in the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades. Although well over half the boys reached this standard, three out of four girls did so, significantly outperforming the boys. Almost all students regularly gain some GCSE graded results.

Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9. Girls maintain this good rate of progress in Years 10 and 11, but boys' progress slowed to satisfactory in 2006. The school recognised the need to accelerate the progress of some boys and has put in place a robust range of strategies to make this happen. Inspection findings and school assessment data indicate a much reduced difference in performance in 2007. Little difference in the relative progress of girls and boys was seen in lessons, where both sexes were making good progress. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make progress in line with that of others.

Sixth form students achieve well. GCE AS and A-level results are a little ahead of national standards. Results of advanced and intermediate vocational courses are above average. Most students make good progress and complete the courses they begin.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given a high priority and is good. This contributes significantly to their personal development. Their behaviour is good and they respond well to the friendly atmosphere within the school. However, a significant minority of parents feel that behaviour in the school is not good.

Inspection findings indicate that behaviour is conducive to learning. Most students are keen to learn, work hard and take pride in their work. It is clear from lessons and discussions with students that they enjoy opportunities to learn independently. This is enhanced by a wide range of clubs at lunch time and after school, which are well supported.

Attendance is satisfactory with very few unauthorised absences. Students feel safe in the school. They say that bullying is very rare and school procedures, such as 'Bulls Eye', ensure that when incidents occur, they are quickly dealt with. The school has been awarded Initial and Intermediate awards for its work on anti bullying.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities, enrichment activities and effective personal, social, health and citizenship education promotes good personal development. Economic well-being is secure. It is enhanced by the input of financial management lessons for students in Years 10 and 11, together with enterprise education. Good careers education and work related learning successfully promotes their understanding of their next stage in their careers.

Year 11 students mentor younger students in a number of ways and this activity benefits both parties. Younger students help in the Senior Citizens' luncheon club and older students help in many other activities such as supported reading, homework club and assisting as lunchtime supervisors. All students have a voice through Year Councils, School Council and the Sixth Form Council, and have used this platform to express their views successfully on a range of issues such as homework and bullying.

Sixth formers make an outstanding contribution to the school community, supporting younger students in a range of ways, including mentoring, providing help in lessons and supporting younger students at after school activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. This applies to both the main school and the sixth form. Teachers manage their classes well and use a wide range of strategies to motivate students. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide effective and caring support for students. Where teaching is at its best, teachers carefully plan their lessons to include a range of appropriate activities which engage students' interest and challenge them to be independent. In these lessons the pace is brisk so students do not become bored or inattentive. Work is carefully planned to match the range of ability found in classes. Where teaching is less effective, the pace of the lesson is slower and work less well matched to individual students' needs. As a result, some students are insufficiently challenged and do not make maximum progress.

The quality of marking of students' work remains inconsistent. There is some very good practice, for example in English, but there is also some superficial marking which impedes students' progress because they do not receive good advice on how to improve their work.

The school has a secure policy for assessment in place but assessment data to measure progress and to set targets for students are not used consistently. Data are used well in science and mathematics, for example, but there is limited systematic use in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets requirements for religious education and information and communication technology (ICT). The number of vocational subjects on offer has expanded and more are planned. However, in Years 8 to 11, due to limitations imposed by the facilities, not enough time is allocated to physical education to meet government's recommendations. This has a negative impact on the school's ability to promote healthy lifestyles. As a result, the extent to which students can do this is only satisfactory.

The Access Centre provides a very good curriculum for disaffected students and those who might otherwise have been alienated from a traditional academic curriculum. There is a good range of extra-curricular sports on offer, which is popular with many students. A wide range of enrichment activities is available including an Enrichment Week in the summer term, and a number of trips abroad. The curriculum in the sixth form is also good and makes adequate provision for religious education.

There is no provision for physical education in the sixth form, again due to the unavailability of facilities. There is a good range of courses available to students and the school is further broadening its offer of vocational options.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

This aspect of the school's work is good. Pastoral care is particularly good, so students soon settle when they start at the school in Year 7. There is a wealth of avenues through which students have a voice and many people to turn to if they have a problem or need a sympathetic ear. Child protection procedures are robust. There are good arrangements to encourage attendance and good behaviour.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. The monitoring of progress through data tracking and a range of interventions is particularly good in science and mathematics and well worth replicating in other subjects. The school has recently implemented a suitable range of strategies to boost the progress of boys in Year 11. However, marking varies and students say that they do not find target-setting helps them to improve in all subjects.

Students who have learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported so that they make the same good progress as others. Careers guidance has recently been strengthened and students feel well guided in selecting their options for Years 10 and 11. Care, guidance and support in the sixth form are good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school is well led. The headteacher and senior team share a vision for the school and have an appropriate focus on raising achievement, particularly of boys. They have successfully

engaged the staff of the school in this focus. They have ensured that good relationships are maintained in the school and that the student-centred ethos of the school is sustained. As a result, the learning environment results in good personal development of learners.

The restructured senior leadership team have good complementary skills and provide clear direction and leadership for the school. They have implemented a suitable system to monitor teaching and learning and have a secure view of strengths and weaknesses. Evaluation of lesson observations however, is less well-focused on learning outcomes for students.

The senior team has responded appropriately to the results of 2006 in terms of the strategies required to raise the achievement of boys. They have, in some cases, not successfully communicated their priorities in this respect to a minority of parents, some of whom expressed concerns during inspection about whether or not the school is sufficiently focused on this issue. Similarly, a significant number of parents would like their views to be consulted more often over school issues.

Middle leaders are clear about the school's efforts to raise achievement and the significance of their roles in helping to bring this about. They lead their departments well. Partnerships with other schools and outside agencies contribute effectively to the school's focus on meeting the needs of all students.

Governors are effective and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They provide a good level of support and challenge for the school and contribute well to ongoing school evaluation.

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.

Annex A

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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	2	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	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
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.

Annex A

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

26 March 2007

Dear Students,

Inspection of Belper School, John O' Gaunts Way, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 1RZ

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you, hearing your views and observing your school at work. You told us that your school is a good one and we agree with you. These are the things we feel are good about it:

- the atmosphere is positive, you enjoy very good relationships with the staff, and they know you very well and want you to do well and achieve highly
- you are achieving good results which are above national averages
- you are encouraged to be confident and independent in your learning and, as a result, your personal development is good
- the school is well led by your headteacher and senior members of staff
- at the inspection, we noted that all students, boys and girls, were making good progress in lessons.

We think that your school can improve further. We have asked your headteacher and staff to:

- expand the strategy to ensure boys consistently achieve as well as they can (last year some boys did not do quite as well as they might have done)
- ensure that your teachers provide you with tasks in lessons which fully stretch all of you
- ensure that you are provided with consistently good feedback on how to improve your work, with clear targets set for you
- check that all subjects track your progress carefully so that your teachers can see very quickly if some of you need additional help.

You can support this by taking note of the targets set for you and responding positively to these. Also you can make full use of the extra help and support available in preparation for Year 9 tests and GCSE exams, especially those boys amongst you, who sometimes prefer to give this a miss!

Thank you for your contributions to the inspection. The views of pupils help us to see the school from your perspective and you were very clear about your views. We hope you continue to enjoy your learning and wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Matharu

Her Majesty's Inspector