

The Burton Borough School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123574
Local Authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	292717
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	S Fowler
Headteacher	David Hill
Date of previous school inspection	27 May 2002
School address	Audley Avenue Newport TF10 7DS
Telephone number	01952 386500
Fax number	01952 386530

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is an average size secondary school that serves a community with lower than usual levels of deprivation. Most students are of White British heritage and the remaining 5% are from a range of backgrounds. On entry to the school, students are of broadly average ability although there is some variation from year to year. The school has a below average proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The school gained arts specialist status in 2004. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Burton Borough School provides a satisfactory quality of education. Achievement and standards are satisfactory at both key stages. This was the case at the last inspection and has been maintained every year since for all groups of learners in almost every subject. This history of consistent satisfactory outcomes has continued through a period of significant change. Governors appointed a new headteacher in 2005 in order to take the school in a different direction. The largely new leadership team has made significant changes to improve the school. The majority of staff are enthusiastic about the new vision for the school. However, some staff and a significant minority of parents are yet to be convinced that some of these changes are for the best. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The leadership team has improved aspects of planning so many lessons are now more focused. However, a small amount of inadequate teaching remains and good practice is not effectively shared.

Students in Year 7 have positive views about learning and enjoy school, partly reflecting the good transition arrangements with local primary schools. However, mainly because of too much mediocre teaching, enjoyment levels decline to become satisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, behaviour was good around the school. However, in lessons where teaching was weak, some students misbehaved. The views of parents and students confirmed this link between the quality of teaching and behaviour in a significant minority of lessons.

Students appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities, and the increased vocational and other opportunities associated with the school's specialist arts status, particularly in music. The curriculum is satisfactory overall because students do not have enough opportunity to positively contribute in lessons and in the running of the school. Future economic well-being and the extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles and safe practices are satisfactory. Good attendance and adoption of safe practices around the school complete a picture of satisfactory personal development. The school is able to provide effective support to ensure all students, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, achieve satisfactorily. There are weaknesses in the procedures for monitoring students' progress. This prevents students from always knowing what they must do to improve and receiving more timely support and rewards. As a result, care, guidance and support are satisfactory.

The school knows what must be done to improve and their record of improvement shows that they have satisfactory capacity to do this. Satisfactory achievement has been maintained through a period of transition. Outcomes for vulnerable students have been improved, exclusions have reduced and punctuality have all improved. Rewards have been recognised as in need of review and there has been a focus on improving behaviour management. However, monitoring and evaluation are inadequate because of the lack of a sufficiently rigorous system for monitoring. Despite this significant weakness, leadership and management overall is satisfactory because the school is aware of these shortcomings and action is being taken to address this weakness. Plans for a whole-school approach to monitoring students' progress are well advanced but there have been too many delays in introducing a more systematic approach to lesson observation, work scrutiny and to ensuring school policies are consistently implemented. This slow rate of progress is because of staffing problems. Lack of effective action to address known weaknesses is contributing to parental unease and some disappointment amongst students about how the school has developed in recent years.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Urgently, improve the monitoring of all aspects of the life of the school and ensure prompt action is taken to reduce inconsistencies.
- Eliminate inadequate teaching and ensure the good practice in some lessons becomes much more widespread.
- Improve communication with parents to ensure the vast majority support important policies relating to increasing achievement and the management of behaviour.
- Increase opportunities for students to take responsibility for all aspects of their development in lessons and in the life of the school generally.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students enter the school with average attainment and leave at the end of Key Stage 4 with average results. During their time in school students make satisfactory progress. In 2006 results varied across the core subjects at Key Stage 3 but were all broadly average. Generally, results since the last inspection have been broadly average in all core subjects at Key Stage 3.

GCSE results have been fairly consistent since the last inspection at around the national average. All point scores have generally been slightly above average. The number of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics has been average. The school does better than average in ensuring students gain at least one qualification (100%) and five A*–G grades (97%). Results from new vocational courses undertaken in collaboration with the local college suggest these have been successful in meeting the needs of students.

The school does well in ensuring that all groups, regardless of ethnic background, gender or previous attainment level, make satisfactory progress. Achievement is consistently satisfactory across most subjects and results in design and technology have been better than those achieved by the same students in other subjects. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve satisfactorily as do the most able.

Recently, the school has started to consistently adopt more challenging targets, commensurate with good levels of achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of students, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Students know right from wrong, they are polite, socialise well and relationships between students are mostly good. Usually students behave well outside lessons and adopt safe practices and so the school is an orderly and calm place. Occasionally behaviour is poor and this disrupts learning but at other times it is good even when teaching is mundane. Students' attitudes towards learning are usually good. Attendance and punctuality are good, homework is completed well and students take a pride in the presentation of their work. Weakness in teaching sometimes results in students that are passive and lack motivation. Students understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle and many engage in

extra activities outside school but they do not always make healthy meal and snack choices in school because they feel they are too expensive. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community through their adherence to school routines and through their fund raising efforts. However, students are not able to contribute enough to the running of the school or monitoring the progress they make. School councillors have been unable to contribute fully to the development of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some good lessons were observed in which teachers gave clear descriptions of what students of different abilities would be able to do by the end of the lesson. Students were provided with a variety of activities, including some practical work, and given opportunities to work at an appropriate level. In lessons of this kind students responded enthusiastically and made good progress. In less successful lessons teachers had not identified the outcomes that would interest and challenge students of all abilities. Sometimes teachers talked for too long, had lower expectations, unclear objectives and gave little opportunity for students to apply what they were learning. As a result students became bored and sometimes their behaviour deteriorated. A perceptive parent commented that 'some teachers are not sufficiently positive and do not expect enough'.

In some lessons, students knew the level at which they were working and what they needed to do to improve. In a design and technology lesson students received individual written feedback about what to do to reach a higher mark. The effective academic guidance is a key reason why students have achieved well in this subject. Generally in most subjects, the quality of assessment is not consistent and information is rarely used to evaluate teaching.

There was little evidence that the school's specialist status had influenced teaching subjects across the curriculum. The school recognises that there is room for improvement in the quality of much of its teaching but the monitoring and evaluating of teaching are not yet frequent or rigorous enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities for all students to achieve. Vocational options and the college based courses for some students have improved the match of curriculum to students' needs at Key Stage 4. Since the last inspection provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved and all students now get their entitlement. Satisfactory provision is made for the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. Take up of work place experience in Year 10 is good. The curriculum reflects the school's specialist status with increased take up of 'arts' subjects. Some good opportunities exist for students to perform in their school and local community. Arts productions such as 'African Jigsaw' and 'Yanomamo' effectively broaden cultural awareness. However, opportunities for students to take more responsibility for their learning, develop independence and contribute to the school community are too limited. Provision for personal, social and health education is too variable. Students commented that these lessons are often a waste of time. Lunchtime and after school activities such as sport, the reading club and musical

tuition provide additional opportunities to learn beyond the taught curriculum. Many students appreciate the very good opportunities to actively participate in music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory level of care, support and guidance for all students and as a result they achieve academically at least satisfactorily. The pastoral support arrangements for vulnerable students, including links with other care professionals, are good, resulting in good personal development. Effective support and guidance for this minority in the school largely explains why the school does well in ensuring all students gain qualifications and why attendance is good. Generally, systems to support students' academic progress are inconsistent across the school. They have relied too much on students seeking help themselves and the ability of staff to recognise which students need support. Effective action is now being taken to improve the tracking of progress. Arrangements to keep students safe are adequate overall but there is a lack of rigour in a number of day-to-day systems. There is a lack of consistency across the school in how behaviour is managed. Year 7 students are very happy with transition arrangements which enable them to transfer from primary school without any anxiety.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Changes have been made to ensure the right people are in place to bring about improvements in most areas. The school has identified what it needs to do to become a good and outstanding school. Satisfactory collaboration with outside agencies is being developed to ensure better support is available to students. The school has recognised the need to ensure its specialist status has more impact on all subjects.

Although the school is moving in the right direction, a minority of staff and parents still need to be convinced about how the school is developing. This scepticism is because changes made so far have not resulted in enough improvement. This lack of progress is because not enough effective action is taken to ensure consistency. Students commented on there being rules that are sometimes ignored because these are not consistently reinforced by staff. Monitoring and evaluation in the school are currently inadequate because there are no robust systems for monitoring teaching and learning and some underperformance is not effectively challenged. Despite this significant weakness, leadership and management are satisfactory because plans are in place to address this issue and there are reasons why action has been delayed. Staff with the required expertise have not been in place and this has been made worse by the budget deficit that has led to time consuming staffing difficulties and limits to professional development.

Despite the budget difficulties the school has appointed a data manager to ensure much better information is available to monitor performance and intervene at an earlier stage. Recent changes have resulted in improved financial management so this aspect is now satisfactory. Governors have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the reasons why some parents and staff are not yet fully supportive of the new leadership team. Governance overall is satisfactory. Governors have not always been given accurate information in order to hold the school to account, but more accurate reporting to them has resulted in significant recent improvements in this aspect of their work.

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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
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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?	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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	3
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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
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

27 April 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Burton Borough School, Newport, TF10 7DS

Thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. We were very impressed with the articulate and perceptive comments you made in response to our many questions. We found out a lot about your school and this helped us decide that your school is satisfactory.

The school does well in ensuring that almost everyone makes at least satisfactory progress. Extra help is given to ensure vulnerable students can achieve. Behaviour is satisfactory and we discovered that you have good opportunities for out of school activities. We agree with you that the school rules could be more consistently applied and that you should have much greater responsibility. We also agreed with many of you and your parents who told us that in some lessons learning was disrupted by poor behaviour. This was usually a result of less effective teaching. In order that the school can develop further we have asked the school to:

- urgently, improve the monitoring of all aspects of the life of the school and ensure prompt action is taken to reduce inconsistencies
- improve teaching so that enjoyment and achievement become good
- improve communication with parents to ensure the vast majority support important policies relating to increasing achievement and the management of behaviour
- increase opportunities for students to have greater responsibility for all aspects of their development in lessons and generally around the school.

Thank you once again for your help in enabling us to understand your school. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Sheldrick HMI