



Bishop Fox's Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123863
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292821
Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Peter Sanderson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Bishop Fox Drive
School category	Community		Taunton
Age range of pupils	11–16		TA1 3HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01823 289211
Number on roll (school)	917	Fax number	01823 334582
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Tony Alderman
		Headteacher	Paul Scutt
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	6–7 February 2007	292821

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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

Bishop Fox's Community School is an average sized comprehensive school. Most students are of White British heritage. The number of students whose first language is not English is well below the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is also below the national average although the number with statements of special educational needs is similar to that found in most schools. The school has a specialist facility for students with hearing impairment. The school has specialist status in business and enterprise.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bishop Fox's Community School provides students with a satisfactory education with many good features. It is an improving school that is well led by its headteacher. He wants the best for all students and ensures that the school is focused on raising achievement. He is well supported by the senior leadership team. The systems for self-evaluation accurately identify the school's strengths and weaknesses and effective plans are in place to address those areas in need of improvement. There are good procedures in place to set students suitably challenging targets and middle leaders monitor their progress towards these targets. Middle leaders are also involved in observing and improving teaching. There have been recent improvements in both the rigour and consistency with which these systems are implemented across the school. This has already had a positive impact on the progress made by students in Years 7 to 9.

Students make satisfactory overall progress in their learning, achieving standards similar to the national average by the end of Year 11. The recent rise in standards at the end of Year 9, which were above the national average in 2006, indicates that students' achievement within the school is improving. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The school is developing and improving teaching. There is much good practice, but some lessons lack pace and do not always meet the needs of specific groups well, particularly the more able students. However, students with learning difficulties and disabilities are consistently well served and consequently now do well throughout the school.

The school is successful in promoting students' personal development. They enjoy coming to school. Relationships are good and the vast majority of students behave well. They show good attitudes to learning and readily become involved in the activities that teachers provide for them. Attendance is at the national average and improving. Students are well cared for and feel safe in school. Their views are sought and welcomed by the school and students are actively involved in the effective student council. The school curriculum is good. It meets the needs and interests of students well and provides them with a good range of both academic and vocational courses to choose from in Years 10 and 11. There is good participation in the range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school and this contributes to the students' good personal development.

The school has demonstrated that it has good capacity to improve. It has successfully addressed the issues raised at the last inspection and standards at the end of Year 9 rose significantly in 2006. Business and enterprise status has also contributed to improving the curriculum and learning climate within the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teaching is as good as the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are similar to the national average and achievement is satisfactory. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The progress made by students during their first three years at the school is improving. Standards at the end of Year 9 rose to above the national average in 2006.

In Year 11, the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C GCSE grades rose significantly to be similar to the national average in 2005 following two years of decline. In 2006 this percentage remained near the national average. However, the percentage of students achieving the higher A* and A grades fell, as did the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to G grades. The school has taken effective action to address these issues. The overall progress of students through the school is satisfactory and improving. The progress of those students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The vast majority of students behave well, concentrate and enjoy their work. Relationships between students and between students and adults are good. Immature behaviour from a very small minority of students occasionally disrupts lessons; however, these incidents are dealt with well by teachers. The attendance of students is at the national average and improving due to effective action being taken by the school.

Students' moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect each other's views and values and have a good understanding of their own and other cultures. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Many make an effort to be healthy by taking part in sports activities outside lessons. A very large proportion of students walk or cycle to school. They are aware of the need to eat healthily, and those who eat in the school dining room make suitable choices. There are numerous opportunities to take responsibility in school, which students grasp readily, so making a very positive contribution to their community. As a result they learn to lead and work with others. The student council has an active voice on school matters and their views are listened to and acted upon.

The school's specialist status contributes well to students' acquisition of skills which will be of use to them in their working life. They develop these through, for instance, the Global Trading Game in Year 7, Enterprise Days, business studies lessons and practice interviews with local business leaders.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although there are many examples of good teaching in the school, teaching is not yet consistently good across all subjects. In most lessons positive relationships exist between staff and students and this creates a good learning climate in the classroom. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards, which have a positive visual impact that motivates and engages students. In the best lessons, teachers offer a good variety of activities that challenge students well. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are provided with good support from teaching assistants. Students respond well to open-ended questioning that challenges their understanding. However, the closed questioning used by some teachers does not allow students to explain their views and develop their understanding. The work in some lessons is not pitched at the right level for all students, particularly the more able and the pace of learning is not fast enough to ensure that students make good progress.

In many lessons teachers explain to pupils what they need to learn or be able to do in order to improve their performance. Reference is usefully made to National Curriculum levels or examination grades. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs and interests of students well. They can choose to study a range of both academic and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. The breadth of the curriculum has been developed by the establishment of good links with external partners. The benefit of the school's specialist college status is evident and has allowed the development of a good range of opportunities for students, such as the delivery of business studies in the lower school. The development of business and enterprise skills is also well supported by a series of conference days. The arrangements made in the curriculum for supporting students with learning difficulties and disabilities are good. Students' experiences are developed by a good range of extra-curricular opportunities. A significant proportion of students are involved in these activities, which range from additional GCSE courses to cultural and sporting opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a caring environment in which students feel safe and secure. The very few reported incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Staff know students well and provide good support for a wide range of needs. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported very well and make good progress. Procedures for child protection meet current requirements. The personal,

health and social education course deals suitably with issues such as drug abuse and sexual relationships. The school makes good use of outside agencies, for example, the police, to provide expertise not available in school. Guidance on subject choices for Years 10 and 11, and study or employment beyond Year 11, is good.

The school has recently developed and improved its systems for monitoring students' academic progress. Those students who are identified as underachieving are provided with effective support. These systems are beginning to impact on the progress made by students. The school has a wide range of data on students' attainment but it is not used consistently well by all teachers to plan work suitable for the full range of students' abilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has set a clear direction for improvement and effectively established a culture of self-evaluation and accountability in the school. This is actively supported and promoted by all senior and middle leaders. This has led to recent improvements in the rigour with which students' learning and achievements are monitored. The impact of this work was seen in the improvement in standards at the end of Year 9 last year. The capacity for the school to make further improvement is good.

The school's self-evaluation is thorough and takes into account the views of staff, governors and students. The self-evaluation accurately identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school improvement plan effectively addresses those areas in need of development. The school is highly inclusive, and gives a high quality of care to all its pupils, including the more vulnerable ones with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The governing body is highly supportive and has a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It plays a full role in monitoring the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning and provides the school with effective challenge.

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Inspection judgements

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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
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	3
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	2
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

During the recent inspection, we met and talked with many of you, sat in some of your lessons and looked at work you had done. We would like to thank you for the help you gave us. Now that we have finished the inspection, I am writing to tell you of our findings.

We thought your school looks after you well, gives you a sound education and is improving. The following points are what we found to be the school's key strengths and weaknesses:

- Your headteacher leads the school well. He wants the very best for all of you and he has good plans to make the school even better. He is well supported by other senior teachers in the school.
- Your relationships with each other and with teachers are good.
- You show good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Staff in the school take good care of you and make sure you feel safe.
- The progress you make in your learning is satisfactory and getting better.
- You have a good range of courses to choose from in Years 10 and 11.
- Many of you take the opportunity to take part in the wide range of after-school clubs, trips and activities offered by the school.
- You enjoy coming to school as shown by the school's improving attendance figures.
- The business and enterprise conference days provided by the school help you develop good skills, attitudes and knowledge in preparation for working life.

In order to improve further we have also asked the school to do the following:

- Many of your lessons are pitched at the right level for you, contain interesting activities and no time is wasted. This helps you learn well. We have asked the school to ensure that all your lessons are like this.

Thank you again and I wish you all good luck for the future.