



Biddulph High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124427
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292994
Inspection date 5 October 2006
Reporting inspector David Anstead HMI

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

| | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Type of school | Comprehensive | School address | Conway Road |
| School category | Community | | Knypersley, Biddulph |
| Age range of pupils | 13–18 | | Stoke-on-Trent ST8 7AR |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01782 523977 |
| Number on roll (school) | 678 | Fax number | 01782 519188 |
| Number on roll (6th form) | 194 | | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | David Bailey |
| | | Headteacher | Stephen Collier |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7 February 2003 | | |

| | | |
|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Age group | Inspection date | Inspection number |
| 13–18 | 5 October 2006 | 292994 |

© 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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Biddulph High School is of below average size. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds represent a much lower proportion than the national average. The school is in its fourth year of designation as a specialist sports college. There is a multi-agency centre on site previously operated by North Staffordshire Primary Health Care Trust and now run by the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Biddulph High is a satisfactory school and is a happy and caring community. A hard working and committed team of staff ensure pupils develop confidence and high self-esteem. Relationships and behaviour are good. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to engage in sporting activities and musical productions. Many of the older pupils develop their leadership skills by running activities for younger pupils at the school and at other local schools. These include sports activities, help with foreign languages and developing computer skills. The school's monitoring of pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils identified as not getting involved in school life as much as others are sensitively encouraged and helped to participate. Most pupils flourish in this highly supportive environment and some excel. For instance the head girl recently won a national award for public speaking.

The school provides a good curriculum. There is a choice of four well planned pathways at Key Stage 4 which ensure the needs of all pupils are met. Partnerships with local colleges enhance the vocational and work-based learning opportunities available. The quality of teaching and learning in most subjects is good and it is outstanding in some. The school has received national recognition for its outstanding system for tracking pupils' academic progress in the main school. Pupils and parents are very well informed about current levels of performance and have detailed guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. Where tracking is used most effectively by teachers, pupils' performance in national tests is highest.

The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is outstanding. They inspire, challenge and support other staff to continually improve. The use of self-evaluation in identifying what needs to improve is given a high priority. A commercial internet based product enables teachers to seek confidential feedback from pupils on how their teaching might improve. Heads of department and senior leaders work with external consultants to produce accurate evaluations which are presented to the governors' curriculum committee. The school has an extremely accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses which closely matched that of the inspector.

However, the progress made by pupils in two areas important for pupils' future economic well-being, although satisfactory, is not as good as in most other aspects of the school's work. Progress in mathematics at Key Stage 4 fell in 2004 from being good to amongst the lowest nationally. The school took immediate robust and effective action to bring about rapid improvement. Progress in mathematics is now satisfactory. Tracking students' academic progress in the sixth form has not been as effective as in the main school. Achievement at A level was below average in 2005. New leadership of the sixth form has taken effective action during the last year and progress has improved. It is now satisfactory. The sixth form represents around one quarter of the school population. Accordingly, overall standards at the school are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory.

The school correctly identified that it needed to improve progress in mathematics and in the sixth form. It has responded properly and taken the necessary action. There has

not been enough time for the full impact of these actions to have brought about sufficient improvement in standards yet. The leadership of the school has a good history of bringing about improvement. The capacity of the school to improve is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Compared to their prior attainment, the progress made by students until recently has been below average. This was in part because the curriculum offered at that time was narrow and inflexible. Leadership of the sixth form at that time was in transition and academic monitoring failed to recognise the extent of underachievement. The progress made by sixth formers improved in 2006 and is now satisfactory. New leadership of the sixth form has improved the curriculum and the guidance and support students receive. Leadership and management of the sixth form are now good. There is clear evidence of the impact of the new leadership of the sixth form in the improving examination results.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the use of the outstanding pupil tracking system to improve students' progress in the sixth form and in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and pupils reach average standards overall. Pupils joining the school have broadly average prior attainment. They make good progress during Year 9. Standards improved in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2006 and are now above average.

Pupils make good or outstanding progress in most GCSE subjects during Key Stage 4. In design and technology the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades was well above average, with three times as many students achieving the top A* and A grades compared to the national figure. However there has been substantial underachievement in mathematics. Progress in mathematics at Key Stage 4 fell in 2004 from being good to amongst the lowest nationally. The school has taken robust and effective action. Progress in mathematics has consequently improved and is now satisfactory. The school is predicting a further improvement in mathematics GCSE results in 2007. In other subjects, standards in GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly average. There is no underachievement amongst any particular groups of pupils.

Standards in the sixth form are now broadly average. The school believes the sixth form curriculum it previously offered did not meet students' needs well and contributed to past underachievement. Current leadership of the sixth form is good and effective action has been taken to improve performance. As a direct result, progress improved in 2006.

The school follows national guidance in setting itself challenging performance targets derived from prior attainment. Statutory targets for 2006 were exceeded. Specialist sports school targets have been met or exceeded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development is good with outstanding features. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attitudes to race equality are developed well through a good citizenship curriculum and participation in a recent national competition 'Show Racism the Red Card' for which the school was the regional champion.

The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles is outstanding. The school's specialist sports status has enabled it to ensure pupils have excellent opportunities to participate in physical activity. Two and half hours per week of physical education or sport are timetabled for all pupils. This is more than is usual and reflects the school's commitment to helping all pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils who do not exercise regularly are identified and encouraged to join an after school club or activity. Some 99% of pupils participate in a sporting activity every week. School meals comply with government guidance on providing a healthy diet.

Pupils make a good contribution to the local and wider community through a wide range of activities. Recently, pupils organised events which were successful in raising several thousand pounds towards alleviating famine in Africa. Older pupils develop their leadership skills through running activities for younger pupils as part of the school's specialist sports programme. The school council represents pupils' views and has been effective in enabling drinking water to be made available throughout the school and in getting the toilets refurbished. During the inspection the normal timetable was suspended, enabling pupils to learn about and reflect on their future careers and personal targets. Learning was effectively supported by 25 representatives from the local business community which brought a realism and excitement to the activities. This made an outstanding contribution to preparing pupils for their future economic well-being which is good overall.

Pupils' enjoyment of school life is clear. They told the inspector that this is a happy school. This is reflected in their good levels of attendance and extremely high levels of participation in after school activities. Pupils feel safe and both pupils and parents say that instances of bullying are rare. Where they do occur they are extremely well dealt with by the school. Attitudes to learning, behaviour and relationships are good. Pupils say that they appreciate being treated like adults by their teachers. Sixth form students say the school 'is a good environment to learn in'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is rigorously monitored by the school. The involvement of external consultants working with each head of department means the evaluation of learning in each department is extremely accurate. Monitoring shows lessons are typically well structured, relate back to what has previously been learnt and link forwards to the next steps. Such lessons are characterised by a brisk pace through activities that offer appropriate challenge. Assessment is used effectively to identify for pupils what they need to do to improve. The quality of teaching and learning varies from outstanding in subjects like business studies, design and technology and physical education and sport to satisfactory in mathematics. Overall teaching and learning are good.

The school purchases an internet based service which enables pupils to comment on the quality of teaching and learning they experience. This provides teachers with individual feedback from pupils they teach on what learning is like in their lessons. The school analyses what works best and seeks to replicate it in other parts of the school. The proportion of subjects where teaching and learning is outstanding is increasing as a consequence of this approach.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school offers a good curriculum with some outstanding features. Partnerships with four local colleges enable the school to offer a flexible curriculum at Key Stage 4 with a good choice of GCSE and vocational courses. Until recently the small size of the sixth form restricted the number of courses the school was able to offer and limited flexibility. This meant some students followed inappropriate courses. The school now admits students of all abilities into the sixth form. This has enabled it to expand and at the same time increase the choice of academic and vocational subjects. The sixth form curriculum is now good and meets the needs of the vast majority of students. The school's specialist status enables it to provide an outstanding and imaginative range of after school clubs and activities that are extremely well attended. As well as the usual range of sports, the school offers a wide range of activities which even includes training in circus skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Care, guidance and support are good with some outstanding features. Pupils say: 'we're encouraged to work hard and we get the support we need'. Systems for tracking pupils' personal and academic development are outstanding and have been featured on the Teachers' TV channel. In the main school, pupils are very clear about their current levels of performance and have excellent guidance on what they need to do improve further. The impact is evident in the good and outstanding progress made by pupils in subjects where tracking is best used.

The school operates an onsite multi-agency centre which students are able to visit at lunchtime for mental, physical and sexual health advice. The centre provides targeted support for pupils with low self-esteem. Parents and pupils speak highly of this support, which has brought about better attitudes to school. Risk assessments are complete and the school meets government requirements for safeguarding pupils. There are good links with feeder schools and other institutions. Guidance on future careers is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels of the school. There is the capacity, drive and will to continue to improve. This stems from the leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, which is outstanding. They provide a clear vision and purpose to the work of school. The impact of their excellent leadership is evident in a range of performance data which shows strong improvement. For example the proportion of Year 11 pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A*–C has increased from 54% three years ago to 72% now. Where the rate of improvement has been slower, as in mathematics and the sixth form, this has been mostly as a result of factors beyond the school's control. The school has responded properly and taken the necessary action. There has not been enough time for the full impact of these actions to have brought about sufficient improvement in standards in mathematics and the sixth form yet. Specialist status has impacted strongly on school improvement. Senior staff coach and support heads of department. The leadership and management of middle managers are good and outstanding in design and technology.

Self-evaluation is accurate and highly effective. It involves middle managers evaluating their own departments, which in turn informs the school's overall self-evaluation. Departmental evaluations are externally moderated by consultants brought in from outside the school. Each head of subject presents their self-evaluation report to the governors. The governors see this process as crucial in helping them fulfil their role in monitoring the performance of the school and in holding it to account. Governors are extremely well informed. They identified past underachievement in mathematics

and the sixth form and are closely monitoring the improvements now being brought about in those two areas. The impact of governance on school improvement is outstanding. Consequently, the school has an extremely good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, which closely matched that of the inspector.

Issues from the last inspection have been addressed successfully. Achievement in English at Key Stage 3 is now good as a result of actions taken by the school. The library provision has been expanded and a librarian appointed. Computer facilities have been expanded enabling the school to make information and communication technology (ICT) a core subject for all pupils. ICT is now widely used across the curriculum.

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? | 3 | 3 |
| 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? | 3 | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 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? | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 | |
| 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 | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | 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 | 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 | 1 | |
| 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

Following my visit to inspect your school, I am writing to tell you about my findings. I would like to thank those of you I spoke to in lessons and the school council for the friendly welcome you gave me. Your thoughtful responses to my questions helped me decide what is good about your school and what needs to be improved. The education you receive at your school is satisfactory overall with many strengths.

These are the main strengths of your school:

- you enjoy coming to school because you feel safe there and because behaviour and relationships are good
- the range of after school activities that help you to adopt healthy lifestyles are outstanding
- the guidance you receive in most subjects on how to improve your performance is outstanding
- you achieve well in most subjects in the main school
- your governors, headteacher and senior staff are outstanding and making the school better.

There are two aspects of the school's work which I think can be better. The progress made by many of you in mathematics, although satisfactory, is not as good as in most other subjects. Students in the sixth form are making slower progress than they did previously further down the school. I have asked your headteacher to improve the progress you make in mathematics and the sixth form by checking more closely on how you are doing. You can help by following the guidance you are given on how to improve.

I wish you every success in the future.