

The Brunts School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133266
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Inspection number	294053
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Pam Haezewindt 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1556
6th form	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Tyler
Headteacher	Mrs Janice Addison
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	The Park Mansfield Nottinghamshire NG18 2AT
Telephone number	01623 623149
Fax number	01623 634241

Age group	11–18
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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

The Brunts School is a large, over-subscribed comprehensive school with an average sized sixth form on the north-east side of Mansfield. There are slightly fewer girls than boys. The very large majority of students is from White British backgrounds with about 4% from a variety of minority ethnic groups. Almost all students speak English as their first language. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average but rising. Those eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The school has been a joint specialist college for performing arts with another local school since 2002. It bid for single specialist status, but retaining joint community plans, in September 2006 and is awaiting the outcome. The sixth form is part of a large consortium of local schools which provide courses for post 16 students. The school was awarded the Artsmark Gold Award in 2003, the Healthy Schools Gold Standard in July 2006 and the Full International School Award for the second time in September 2006. The headteacher took up her post in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Students' achievement and progress are satisfactory overall and improving well in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 there are signs of improvement but this has been a cause for concern in recent years. Post 16 students achieve satisfactorily. Students' personal development is good with much to be celebrated, such as good attendance in the main school, very positive attitudes to learning and taking responsibility, and very good contribution to the community.

Provision is satisfactory overall. Whilst there is a lot of good teaching in lessons, there are areas for improvement, such as planning for individual pupils' needs and continuous assessment for learning and marking. The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities for students, including very good extra curricular enrichment activities. It still does not provide the National Curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT) for half of the students in Key Stage 4, nor a broad enough range of less advanced courses in the sixth form. Pastoral care, guidance and support are good but academic guidance has not yet caught up. However, the new systems have the potential to remedy this quickly. Leadership and management and the capacity to improve are satisfactory. Recent self-evaluation shows that the school knows its strengths and where it needs to improve. The headteacher has very quickly assessed the direction the school needs to take to improve outcomes and has put in place very good measures to achieve this. However, these have not yet had time to make a significant impact on staff performance and students' achievements, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation at all levels is not yet embedded in the work of the school. Links with parents are good and they are generally very supportive of the school, although a very small number see behaviour as an issue. The inspection team did not find this to be the case. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

The take-up of the specialist arts subjects - drama, music and dance - has increased year on year since the school became a specialist arts college and standards have steadily risen. Most students recognise the benefits of being a performing arts college and how it adds to their cultural development. Many of them take part in the opportunities provided through having this status. They talked eloquently about 'Arts Week' and how they thought being a performing arts college, along with being an international school, contributed to their understanding of different cultures and ethnic groups in this country. These initiatives also contribute well to the school's links with different communities both at home and overseas. The school has strong links with local primary schools where it helps with the provision for performing arts, ICT and modern languages.

Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory and it gives satisfactory value for money. Standards are close to the national average and students make satisfactory progress. The large majority complete the courses they begin. Students have a good choice of advanced courses but the provision of courses below advanced standard is not broad enough, despite the wider opportunities for students to study vocational courses since the creation of the consortium. Students enjoy their education and have very positive attitudes to learning. Students

benefit from good enrichment opportunities, including social and cultural activities. They are excellent role-models for younger students and make a good contribution to the school and to the wider community. The sixth form committee is a particular strength, contributing effectively to decision making. Students are represented on the school's governing body. They appreciate the good care, guidance and support they receive from their tutors. However, systems for tracking student progress are underdeveloped. Underachievement needs to be identified earlier and followed up with appropriate intervention. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and often good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory with the current support recently provided by senior leadership. However, the vision for post-16 provision is not sufficiently coherent. Monitoring and evaluation are not robust enough. The school's quality assurance of provision for their students in other institutions in the consortium is weak

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and standards, especially in Key Stage 4, by ensuring that the individual learning needs of all students are provided for, and marking, assessment for learning and academic guidance are improved.
- Ensure that monitoring of performance at all levels is rigorous and regularly evaluated, setting challenging but attainable targets.
- Improve the strategic direction of the sixth form, the tracking of sixth formers' progress, and broaden the provision.
- Ensure that the National Curriculum for ICT is taught to every pupil in Key Stage 4, and that all students are provided with their entitlement to use ICT in subjects to improve their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make satisfactory progress overall. In 2006 Key Stage 3 results in national tests for English, mathematics and science, standards were above the national average, showing an improvement on 2005. The school exceeded its targets for all three subjects. For the past three years however, attainment in Years 10 and 11 has been below average. Although there was an increase in the number of students gaining five or more grades at GCSE A* to C in 2006, GCSE results remained below average, especially when taking into account English and mathematics. The school did not meet its Key Stage 4 targets in 2005 and 2006. Year 11 students in these years were the last to be specifically affected by the disruption to their learning of the rebuild of the school. Information for 2006 indicates a dip in the performance of boys compared to 2005 whilst that of girls improved overall. Progress, particularly in English was below expectations. The overall five A* to G pass rate for boys and girls is in line with the national average.

The school is now using its analysis of performance data with increasing effect to identify and tackle underachievement at all levels. The predictions for 2007 indicate that current Year 11 students are making at least satisfactory progress. The school is aware through its tracking that there is still some underachievement and is working hard to eliminate this across all year groups. Standards in the three designated subjects of the performing arts college have risen steadily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development is good. Students enjoy school because it offers them lots of opportunities to improve their learning and to develop new skills. Consequently attendance has improved and is now good. Students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school. The consistent approach to unacceptable behaviour and the higher expectations of the staff have led to a reduction in exclusions, although they are still too high. Students are responding well to the school's teaching about healthy lifestyles by choosing healthy food options and by taking part in an extensive sports programme. Many of them say how proud they are of their school and are keen to see it improve further. Thus they respond well to the responsibilities that the school entrusts them with. This is apparent in the work of the school council which represents the views of their year groups, organises fund raising and has been major partners in, for example, changing lunchtime eating menus. The school has been innovative in involving students in the future of the school so that there are opportunities for them to assist in selecting new staff. Such opportunities are helping them to develop the good social and moral qualities and skills that they will need in adult life. Their cultural education is good because the school uses its international and performing arts status to promote a good understanding of the diverse nature of the world that we live in. Spiritual development is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school is fully staffed with specialist teachers. Many are recently qualified and have brought with them the benefits of their recent up-to-date training. In the large majority of lessons observed during the inspection, students made good progress. A strong feature of their learning is their capacity to work maturely and cooperatively in groups. They behave and concentrate well in lessons, and sometimes demonstrate a good deal of independence in their learning. They are usually clear about what they are expected to learn and why. Lessons are increasingly providing opportunities for students to be creative in their thinking and writing. In most lessons, the teacher's enthusiasm and energy stimulates and motivates students, relationships are good and praise and encouragement are used effectively. These factors provide a favourable learning atmosphere.

Nevertheless, other factors determine that teaching and learning are not better than satisfactory. Teachers' planning does not always cater for the full range of learning needs, including those of the most able and those with learning difficulties. The school does not yet diagnose the additional learning needs of some students accurately enough. Staff have begun to monitor the progress of their students more effectively during and at the end of lessons, but this is not yet consistent practice. Marking is inconsistent in quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. With the exception of the provision of ICT at Key Stage 4 to half the students who do not take an accredited course in ICT, the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The recent re-organization of course options in Key Stage 4 has given students greater flexibility of choice and they can now match their choices more closely to their interests. Vocational courses provide a wider range of options for all students. Personalised learning packages are provided for approximately 30 students to meet their curriculum needs. Satisfactory provision is made for the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum reflects well on the school's specialist status and the take-up of performing arts subjects has steadily increased year on year. Take-up of a modern language in Key Stage 4, though still low, is improving. Work related learning and enterprise feature heavily in the personal, social and health education programme in Years 9 to 11. Good links with a variety of local businesses support students' work experience in Year 11 and add to the development of students' self-confidence and enterprise skills.

The school offers a very good range of enrichment activities. Many students take part in the wide range of sporting activities and other clubs, societies and visits. Arts activities such as the 'Go Live at The Big Top' and 'Summer in the Street' give Brunts' students the opportunity to perform on a range of public stages within their local community. Post 16 students studying stage management have developed their skills through their direct involvement in some of these dramatic productions. The school has developed good links with other countries which enrich both the work of students and staff. As one young student said, 'We are proud of the school because it is international'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Pastoral support is good because detailed and well thought out systems are in place to protect and safe-guard students. This includes good child protection procedures which all staff know and understand. Students feel safe and are confident about approaching staff with their concerns. The school works in close partnership with outside agencies so that students who may be at risk have a caring, supportive and challenging environment in which to learn. Parents have expressed their satisfaction with the support provided by the school. Students say that the good arrangements to help them when they join the school ensure they settle down quickly.

Good pastoral care is not yet matched by the quality of academic guidance provided. This is satisfactory. It is improving because the work in the Student Learning Centre and the roles of the Behavioural and Pastoral Managers are having a good effect on the attitudes and learning achievements of under achieving students. Students are aware of their learning targets. However, they do not know as often as they should how to move on and make progress because they are not consistently helped to do so. The support that teaching assistants provide does not focus closely enough on the individual targets of those who have learning difficulties. Students with particular gifts and talents are supported well by relevant programmes and activities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school judges leadership and management satisfactory and the inspection team agrees. The headteacher is setting a very clear direction based very strongly on improvement at all levels within the school. Her objective is to ensure that students achieve as well as they possibly can. Recently the roles of the senior leadership team have been re-defined and made much clearer so that members can develop their roles, focus on specific needs and give support to staff. In addition, the line-management structure has been strengthened and the process tightened up so that line-managers have regular meetings with curriculum and year-learning managers to quality assure provision and students' progress. A specific cycle of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning throughout the year with actions for improvement is in the process of development. The performance management process is now fully aligned to the school's improvement priorities and will trigger the necessary professional development. The school provides good opportunities for staff to develop their leadership skills. There is a clear system for tracking students' progress which is beginning to be effective as more staff see how it can be used to help individual students.

The school's climate for learning is good and it has a good reputation in the community. There are very good links beyond the school which enhance all students' learning. The school runs very smoothly on a day to day basis, the school's budget and specialist status budget are managed well and most resources are satisfactorily deployed. Insufficient use is made of computers for work in subjects, and the learning resource centre. As one student said: 'We need to be directed more to use it and to research from books'. Accommodation is satisfactory. Governors support and challenge the school well and are beginning to develop a more strategic role in the school. They have links with particular aspects of school life but they are not yet fully developed.

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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?	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	3	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
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	2
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The attendance of learners	2	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	3
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

19 March 2007

Dear Students

The Brunts School, The Park, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 2AT

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school last week, I should like to thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your school, talking to us very maturely and showing us to places in school when necessary.

We are pleased to tell you that your school provides a satisfactory standard of education with quite a lot that is good. For example,

- those of you we talked to are proud to attend The Brunts School and think that it offers you lots of opportunities to develop your interests and to get on
- you are attaining above average standards in Key Stage 3 and your progress is satisfactory and improving in Key Stage 4
- your personal development is good; your behaviour and attendance are good and you have very good attitudes to learning
- you are very aware of how to be healthy and very many of you are following healthy lifestyles
- through being a performing arts college and an international school your cultural development is good, as is your moral and social development, because you have lots of different opportunities to take responsibility and to take part in activities together
- we saw lots of good lessons, but occasionally there were dull ones and ICT was hardly ever used to help you learn; marking and assessment does not always help you improve
- the school provides a good range of subjects and extra-curricular activities, though the lack of provision of ICT for everyone in Key Stage 4 is a weakness. The sixth form curriculum is too narrow
- you feel safe at school and are confident to approach staff if anything is bothering you
- your headteacher and staff have your best interests at heart and want you to do as well as you possibly can.

We have asked the school to look at ways of improving standards and progress, and ensuring that this happens through regular checks. We have also asked that ICT be used a lot more in all your subjects and that all of you study it in Key Stage 4, not just those of you have chosen to do an examination in it. Finally, whilst recognising that you are very happy in the sixth form, we should like to see it developed further.

Thank you again for your help on the inspection and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Pam Haezewindt HMI

Lead Inspector