



Bebington High Sports College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105106
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 295341
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Jane Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Higher Bebington Road
School category	Community		Bebington, Wirral
Age range of pupils	11–18		Merseyside CH63 2PS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6454154
Number on roll (school)	1040	Fax number	0151 6438065
Number on roll (6th form)	95	Chair	Mrs S Clarke
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Headteacher	Mr Brian Jordan
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	22–23 November 2006	295341

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Bebington High Sports College, an average-sized comprehensive school, is situated in a residential area of the Wirral, some parts of which experience significant levels of social and economic disadvantage. The number of students eligible for free school meals is about twice the national average at 28%. A small percentage of students, 5%, are of minority ethnic heritage: few have home languages other than English. There are many more boys than girls in Years 7 to 11. Students enter the school having achieved results at primary school that were slightly below average. About 20% of students, an average proportion, have learning difficulties and/or disabilities: of these, 27 have a formal statement of special educational need. Fewer students than is typical join or leave the school at times other than at the start of their secondary education.

When the school was inspected in October 2004 the sixth form was judged to be inadequate because it had significant weaknesses in the education it provided for students over 16. Its progress has subsequently been monitored on a regular basis by HMI. The sixth form is smaller than average but has grown in size over the last two years. Many students enter the sixth form having attained lower results at GCSE than is often the case nationally.

The school has held specialist sports college status since 2001 and, on re-designation in 2006, received commendation for its work in the community through the Youth Sports Trust. It hosts the Schools Sports Partnership Programme, which involves 35 local secondary and primary schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bebington High Sports College is an improving and welcoming school that provides a satisfactory education for its students. Over the last two years there has been a real shift in the school's ethos and students, parents, staff and governors rightly believe it is a better place for learning. Several parents wrote they would now recommend the school to others and one commented, 'I could not be more pleased with the huge improvement in all aspects of the school.' The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's future - one where all students can fully develop academically and personally.

Most students enjoy school and are particularly enthusiastic about the many sporting activities provided. They, and their parents, know that they are well cared for by approachable and welcoming staff. Students are encouraged to take responsibility and their behaviour during the inspection was good. Some parents expressed concern about the misbehaviour of a minority of students but recognise that the school is dealing firmly with it. Attendance is inching closer to national averages.

The school's status as a specialist sports college has had a significant impact on students' achievement and personal development. The School Sports Partnership provides coaching in a broad range of sports at levels appropriate to students' needs and interests, and offers a useful professional development programme for teachers. Many older students have gained sports leadership qualifications. New courses for students aged 14 to 19 are popular and standards are rising.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science have risen steadily over the last few years and were close to national averages in 2006, meeting most of the school's challenging targets. At GCSE in 2006, more students than ever before gained at least five A* to C grades, but other key measures such as the proportion gaining five or more A* to C grades were similar to 2005 and standards were significantly below average. At both key stages students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make broadly satisfactory progress. Improvements to the curriculum and the quality of teaching are laying the foundations for higher standards in future at Key Stage 4.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are many good teachers in the school but best practice is not as widespread as it might be and not all teaching promotes independent thinking and good study habits. Useful training has led to better use of assessment in promoting learning but inconsistencies remain in the quality of homework and marking. The curriculum is satisfactory and at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form students can choose relevant and interesting courses.

Suitable management systems have been introduced to underpin the day-to-day work of the school, check its quality and help steer improvement. But there remains work to do to ensure that these systems, and the information that they generate, are used to best effect by managers at all levels. Nevertheless, the school has a broadly accurate view of the quality of its work and knows what needs to be better. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is satisfactory: the school's previous designation as having an inadequate sixth form no longer applies.

Improving the sixth form has been a focus for senior managers, particularly over the last year, and together with the director of the sixth form they have built a solid base for future development. Standards are improving at A level but pass rates on AS units in Year 12 are still low. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with an improving proportion being good. Assessment of students' work is thorough and students are making the progress that is expected of them.

More students are joining the sixth form and successfully completing their courses. Care, guidance and support are good. There are effective systems for induction and students' progress is checked frequently and extra support provided where necessary. Students enjoy learning and make a positive contribution to the rest of the school and to the wider community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards across the school but particularly in Key Stage 4.
- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good.
- Help students develop independent learning skills and good study habits.
- Make better use of the outcomes from monitoring and data analysis to identify precisely what is working well, and what needs to be better, to aid timely intervention and inform improvement planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. It is best in Key Stage 3 where the provisional results of national tests in English, mathematics and science in 2006 were close to average in the proportions of students achieving the standard expected by age 14, Level 5. The school's analysis has found that boys do less well than girls in reading: action is being taken to address this. Achievement is improving but is weaker in Key Stage 4 where the 2006 results fell short of the school's targets. There are several reasons for this, including a curriculum that did not suit all students, a legacy of previous weaknesses in provision and students' underdeveloped study skills and work habits. About two fifths of the students gained five or more A* to C grades. Similar proportions to 2005 achieved five or one A* to G passes, 86 and 94% respectively. Although the school has become much better at analysing examination results to establish how well students have achieved, it needs to be quicker off the mark in identifying when and why things are not going as well as they should and in acting decisively to bring swift improvement.

Standards at A level rose significantly in 2006. Most students met or bettered the performance that might have been anticipated from their GCSE results, although results remain low in comparison with national figures. The pass rate rose to 95%, with an increase in the small numbers achieving A and B grades. Students in the first year of A-level study made satisfactory progress in most subjects but overall pass rates remain low, exceptionally so in some subjects.

Students make satisfactory and often good progress in lessons, although this is not always sustained over time, partly because they are not good at remembering earlier learning and because some lack effective study skills. Most students are keen to learn and flourish when teaching is enthusiastic and challenging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory with good features, including those that stem from the significant contribution made by the specialist sports status. Most students are enthusiastic about the wide range of sporting and cultural activities provided by the school and many older students are qualified sports leaders, officiating at tournaments and competitions for younger students and primary school pupils.

Students understand about healthy lifestyles and eating healthily: all students receive at least two hours physical education each week. They make the most of opportunities to play a part in the school community, for example as school councillors, prefects and peer mentors, and know that their views count. Most but not all students have some opportunities to acquire workplace skills, often through work experience.

Behaviour during the inspection was good in lessons and generally sensible around the school: relationships were good. The school deals firmly with any misbehaviour and efforts to encourage positive attitudes from all students are strenuous and increasingly successful. Rates of exclusion, although high, are declining and reflect the improving ethos of the school. Students' attendance is monitored efficiently: promoting good attendance remains one of the school's priorities. Students display good multicultural awareness, as shown by the recent 'Respect in the Community' initiative.

The personal development and well-being of sixth form students are good. They enjoy learning and respond well to teachers' high expectations. Relationships are very good: students appreciate being treated as young adults. Attendance and punctuality have improved. Students enjoy participating in healthy leisure activities on the weekly sports afternoon. They make a significant contribution to the school community, including helping younger students with reading, organising charity fairs and supporting students new to the school. The active sixth form council is at the centre of sixth form social life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, some is good or outstanding. The school has taken effective steps towards strengthening teaching and this is leading to improved learning. Many teachers use their subject knowledge well and have good relationships with their students. When combined with effective planning, and lively enthusiastic teaching, students make good progress. In the best lessons students are given good opportunities to think for themselves and to contribute their own ideas. They are encouraged to consider what they have learnt and to comment on their own and others' work. However, in some lessons, too much direction by the teacher and a lack of planning to meet individual needs means that some students are not given opportunities to develop their learning skills and to progress as well as they might.

While homework is often used well to reinforce and extend learning, particularly in the sixth form, a few parents commented on its irregularity. The quality of marking is inconsistent. In the best cases, notably in the sixth form, students are given good information about their progress and clear guidance on how to improve. Such effective practice is not well established in all subjects. There is a rigorous approach to tracking the progress of sixth form students towards their target grades. A similar system for the rest of the school is in the early stages of implementation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. At Key Stage 3 it is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements: some students benefit from extra help with literacy and numeracy and there are opportunities to extend gifted and talented students. Checking that the needs of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met is less well established.

The school has reviewed the Key Stage 4 curriculum in order to better meet students' needs and abilities. The sports college specialism and good links with the local college and other training providers have improved the range and popularity of vocational courses and are creating more routes into sixth form study.

New sixth form courses have been introduced, including some that develop students' understanding of the world. This broader curriculum is popular with students and has led to more staying on. The school is working to improve the range of vocational courses and introduce more options at levels below advanced level.

Extra-curricular activities are a strength of the school. Clubs and activities start before school, continue through lunchtime and after school. Students enjoy participating in visits. Many praised the very good opportunities to take part in sporting activities.

Students benefit from specialist coaching, for example by a national league basketball coach.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school cares well for its students and has taken suitable steps to meet current government requirements for safeguarding.

Students feel safe from bullying and other harassment and there is always a listening adult to hand. Learning mentors are well organised and highly skilled in their work with students. Productive links with outside agencies support vulnerable students. An alternative curriculum is proving successful in recapturing the interest of disaffected students.

Students appreciate the support they are given and programmes targeted at specific groups of older students help to boost examination results. The 'Helping Hands' club supports students with homework. However, the tracking of students' progress of in Years 7 to 11 is less well developed than in the sixth form.

Good careers advice prepares students for the next step in their education, training or the world of work. Year 11 students receive good advice on post-16 options. The Aim Higher initiative encourages students to consider higher education and gives them an opportunity to visit universities, and support for students applying to university is well coordinated and includes practical advice on applications and finance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory and improving. The headteacher's determination to create an inclusive school where all students have opportunities for personal growth and success underpins his hands on approach to school leadership. With a focus centred firmly on the students the development of robust management systems and structures has sometimes come second. However, over the last year these have been introduced and are leading to secure and rapid improvement. The senior leadership team has been strengthened this term by the appointment of a second deputy headteacher, creating the additional capacity that the school has needed for some time. Senior staff now focus energy on leading their areas of responsibility rather than only managing everyday issues. The quality of middle level leadership varies but is satisfactory overall: some emerging good practice is well worth sharing more widely. The sixth form is generally well organised. Some attention has been given to its strategic development and the school is poised to take advantage of opportunities to develop the vocational curriculum in partnership with local schools and college.

The school's self-evaluation is slightly generous in places, in part reflecting the degree of change that has occurred. More robust analysis of outcomes of monitoring is required to allow earlier intervention where weaknesses are identified and to feed into the cycle of review and improvement planning. The quality of whole school and departmental development plans is satisfactory, although they lack sufficient emphasis on improving teaching as a means to raise achievement.

Governance has improved significantly since the last inspection and is good. A full complement of governors, improved information from senior managers, appropriate committee structures and developing links with subjects help governors support and challenge the school. Financial management is good and the budget recovery plan is well on track. Effective use is made of resources and accommodation and the school provides satisfactory value for money. The school and governing body value the good support received from the local authority, which expects to continue to provide tailored support to the school.

The school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. Although slow initially, progress in improving the sixth form accelerated over the last year: provision is no longer inadequate. Other areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report included the curriculum and assessment and there has been considerable progress on both fronts. The school has a wealth of data on students' target grades, and the standards they achieve, although it is not always used to guide planning enough so that lessons are tailored to students' needs and abilities, to track their progress, or to help managers evaluate the impact of their work. More improvement is also needed at Key Stage 4 and in Year 12, and in strengthening students' basic skills.

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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	3
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	4
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?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
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	3	

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?	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.

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	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	2	
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	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

I am writing to tell you about the findings of our inspection but, first of all, I would like to thank you for the friendly welcome you gave to us. We enjoyed visiting your lessons, seeing your work and talking to you about your views and experiences of school.

You may know that I have visited your sixth form several times over the last two years to check how well it was doing. More of you have chosen to stay on into the sixth form this year and you told us you are very happy with sixth form life. Well, this time, our inspection found that the sixth form has improved so much that it will no longer be called 'inadequate'. What's more, you and your parents told us that the rest of the school is getting better too, which is good news for the future.

Here are some of the things we liked best about your school.

- The school's specialism in sports is good. Most of you enjoy sports a lot, especially the clubs and fantastic opportunities to be coached by national sports coaches. You know it keeps you fit and healthy.
- You behaved really well in lessons during the inspection - keep it up! You get on very well with each other and with the staff. We know a few of you misbehave sometimes but the headteacher and staff are working hard to help you get a good education, so do try to do your best.
- New GCSE and sixth form courses are giving you a good range of options to choose from.
- The headteacher and staff care for you well. They are there if you have a worry and like to hear your good news too. Sixth form students receive good advice about their courses and how well they are doing. It's a bit more mixed elsewhere in the school.

We have asked Mr Jordan, the staff and governors, to do the following things to improve your school further.

- Help you gain better results in Key Stage 3 tests, GCSE and sixth form examinations.
- Improve lessons so that more of them are good and challenge you to think for yourselves.
- Help you develop the skills to become good learners in school and at home.
- Be quicker at finding out what is working well and what needs to be better.

I am sure you will want to play your part in helping Bebington High improve even more. You can help by giving your views and suggesting ideas. Making sure that you attend regularly is important too.

I wish you all success in the future.