

Burnley Schools' Sixth Form

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135000
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	298620
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	16–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	252
6th form	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tim Litherland
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Smith
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Heald Road Burnley Lancashire BB10 1JB
Telephone number	01282 436324
Fax number	01282 832434

Age group	16–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Burnley Schools' Sixth Form was established in September 2006 and occupies temporary accommodation, prior to moving to a new building in September of this year. It serves an area of mixed social and economic characteristics but about half the students are from deprived areas and are in receipt of maintenance grants. The majority of students are of White British background and just under a half are from the Asian heritage community. Students' attainment on entry to Year 12 is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Aspects of its work are outstanding.

Over one year and two terms, leaders, managers and governors have established a harmonious and hard working learning community where achievement is good and students' personal development is excellent. Many students were spoken to during the course of the inspection and all identified the good teaching and the exemplary care and support they receive as the reasons for their enjoyment of lessons and their high aspirations. As a result students' progress, including the progress of those from the Asian heritage community, is good. The majority of parents are supportive of the school and recognise that students are progressing well in their work. A very small number expressed concern about behaviour. Students, however, commented on the excellent relationships they have with each other and their teachers, and that the school was free from any form of intimidation or racial tension. Inspection evidence confirmed their view.

The challenge facing the school is to raise standards further and establish a pattern of high attainment over time. It is strongly placed to do this because it has demonstrated the capacity to manage change well and achieve a great deal in a short time. The school already has excellent partnerships with other institutions within the Burnley Learning Partnership and on the Burnley Campus, as well as outside agencies, to guide and support students. The move to the new buildings will strengthen these links and establish the school at the centre of the local community.

The school rightly put in place in September 2006 a curriculum which ensured continuity of learning for all students. This comprised predominantly Advanced level work because students seeking vocational or work-based learning secured places at partner institutions. Plans are being developed to extend the existing limited vocational provision under the new national diploma pathways which will be introduced in September.

Effective systems are in place to monitor performance, self-evaluation is accurate and forward planning is good. The assessment and tracking of students' progress are rigorous and intervention is timely and effective when weaknesses are discovered. Students are mature, confident and self-reliant and they have the ability to work independently. They realise their ambitions and progression rates to university or into employment are high. Teaching is good but at times opportunities are missed to encourage a questioning and critical approach to learning and so foster independent working. Leadership and management at all levels are good and governors fulfil their statutory obligations well. They are also the school's friends and its good ambassadors. The school provides equality of opportunity for all students. Its commitment to this is seen in the level of care and support afforded the small number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in the good progress they make.

Good foundations have been laid for the future. The school's capacity to raise the bar and improve further is excellent.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

test

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency in the way teaching challenges students to be critical and independent-minded learners.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 0

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are average and students' progress and achievement are good.

The school achieved broadly average results at the end of its first year. However, the proportion of students gaining grades A or B in the Advanced level examinations exceeded expectations and challenging performance targets for these students were surpassed. Nearly all subjects achieved a 100% pass rate. Results in the Advanced Supplementary examinations were equally good, with students progressing well and meeting their performance targets. The quality of work seen during the course of the inspection, together with the school's own rigorous assessments, indicates that progress remains good for all students, including those from the Asian heritage community. The pace of learning is now faster and standards are rising in the very small number of subjects where performance in 2007 was below expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 0

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school encourages tolerance and it fosters an appreciation of cultural diversity. Students comment that they enjoy the politeness and respect they encounter in their day-to-day dealings with each other. One student commented that 'there is an amazing range of cultures and traditions; we learn loads off each other'. They say that racial intolerance is non-existent. Opportunities for spiritual development are well developed by the effective work of the Community Faith Coordinator. He has established strong links between the school and wider community that are leading to an ethos of shared values founded on community cohesion. Students report that they feel safe in school. Enjoyment was evident in the majority of lessons observed. Attendance is above average and behaviour excellent. Students value the mature and friendly relationships they have with their teachers, feeling that help is readily available when needed. Students adopt healthy lifestyles by eating a balanced diet and taking advantage of the wide and varied opportunities for exercise. They play an active part in the life of the school and say that if the 'student voice' expresses any concerns it is heard and acted upon. Students also make a significant contribution to the wider community through fund-raising for local, national and international causes. The work related learning programme, excellent guidance on higher education and employment opportunities and students' good basic skills prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 0

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. There is a positive learning environment throughout the school, calm and purposeful in every subject area. Students have exemplary attitudes to their studies and work hard. They collaborate well with each other and have confidence in the subject knowledge and expertise of their teachers. When asked to identify the school's strengths, every student interviewed spoke about the quality of the teaching and the support they receive as individuals. They appreciated the balance in lessons between whole class discussions and question and answer sessions, and the opportunities for research and independent working. Teachers' marking and assessments are good and students are clear about how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. The enthusiasm that teachers have for their subjects is conveyed to students and explains their high ambitions for themselves. In some of the lessons seen, opportunities were missed to engage students in discussion and encourage them to be critical, independent-minded learners. The challenge facing the school is to ensure that the rigour seen in most lessons becomes common throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 0

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It offers an impressive range of subjects at Advanced Supplementary and Advanced levels, including subjects in technology and the creative arts. There is a limited range of vocational and level 2 options open to students. The school is involved with partnership plans for the introduction of vocational diplomas from September for future students as part of the 14–19 pathways. There is good provision for life skills and work-related aspects of the curriculum are developed in liaison with local businesses. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. An effective programme of personal, social, health and careers education, including citizenship, contributes to students' outstanding personal development and prepares them well for their future education and work. The curriculum is enriched by a range of activities, including writing workshops and theatre visits, which support students' learning. There is also a strong programme of extra-curricular activities in sports, arts and music, as well as a wide range of academic subjects in which many students participate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 0

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support for students are outstanding. There is excellent information and guidance for potential students and the number enrolling is rising. Strong links with parents or carers are established at an early stage through the close links with the five main feeder high schools. Parents are kept well-informed at every stage of students' education. Students make informed choices. Effective induction programmes help them to settle quickly into their courses and school life. Excellent academic guidance is provided through an impressive system that gathers data about every student's progress on a half-termly basis. Effective support to

tackle cases of underachievement is provided by senior leaders and subject specialists. Advice and guidance for the majority of students who go on to higher education are excellent and progression rates to university are high. Students are also successful in securing employment or work placements with training when they leave school. Student protection measures are in place, and health and safety and risk assessments are carried out on a regular basis. There are strong partnerships with external agencies, including Connexions, and the small number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive the support they need. The comprehensive tutorial programme includes a strong focus on personal, health and social development and financial management.

Leadership and management

Grade: 0

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school has come a long way in a short time. It has rapidly put in place excellent systems to monitor and improve students' performance. The establishment of the new school as a calm and purposeful place where students from diverse backgrounds work harmoniously together is successful. This has been achieved through good leadership and management at all levels and the support of knowledgeable and far-sighted governors. Aspects of leadership and management are outstanding. Equality of opportunity pervades all aspects of the school's work and it is free from discrimination or racial tensions. Morale is high. Teachers, assistants and administrative staff work effectively as a team. They feel that the school is moving forward and upwards and, in no small measure, this is due to the leadership qualities of the headteacher and the understanding and guidance provided by the chair of governors. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Forward planning is very good because clear and measurable success criteria are in place to evaluate the impact of that planning on students' progress. There has been meticulous financial management by the School Manager who has been prominent in establishing the school as part of the community and preparing for the move to the new building. The challenge facing the school is to improve students' progress and achievements and establish a consistent pattern of high performance over time. It is well placed to do this because its capacity for further improvement is excellent.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	IE ²	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	IE ²	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	IE ²	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners		3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	IE ²	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	IE ²	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	IE ²	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	IE ²	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	IE ²	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	IE ²	
How well learners enjoy their education	IE ²	
The attendance of learners	IE ²	
The behaviour of learners	IE ²	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	IE ²	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	IE ²	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	IE ²	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	IE ²	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	IE ²	1

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?	IE²	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	IE ²	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	IE ²	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	IE ²	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	IE ²	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	IE ²	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	IE 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

20 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Burnley Schools' Sixth Form, Lancashire, BB10 1JB

Thank you for the warm welcome you extended to us when we visited your school and a special thanks to those of you who gave generously of your time to talk to us. Our task was to inspect the quality of education you are receiving and the progress you are making in your work and your personal development.

Yours is a good school. There are outstanding features in its provision and in your personal development. The care, support and guidance you receive are excellent and you are mature, self-reliant and independent young people. You are well placed to make the most of the next stage of your education or to move into employment. You have the personal qualities to be successful in all you attempt.

Academic progress is good and you achieve well by the time you leave the sixth form. You speak highly of the quality of teaching and the help you get from staff. We agree that teaching is good and that all who work in the school are committed to equality of opportunity for every student. There are a few occasions when teaching does not challenge you sufficiently to be questioning and critical learners, and this is an area for improvement.

The school has come a long way in a short time. Working relationships, racial harmony and your attitudes to your studies are impressive. You have come together well as a student body, and appreciate and learn from the school's cultural and social diversity. This tolerant learning environment is excellent preparation for working in multi-cultural Britain.

We found leadership and management to be good and that the school has great potential to improve further. In no small measure this is down to how well you work with staff and the example you are setting for those students coming after you.

We enjoyed our visit and the conversations we had with so many pleasant, intelligent and perceptive young people. Thank you again and we wish you well for the future.

Brian Dower

Lead inspector