

The Bolsover School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112963
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number	302338
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Cook HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	880
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Oakley
Headteacher	Mr K Dean
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Mooracre Lane Bolsover Chesterfield Derbyshire S44 6XA
Telephone number	01246822105
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school has Business and Enterprise specialist status. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There is a small number of students from minority ethnic groups.

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 where standards have risen. There is a determination to ensure students do well academically so that they can make choices about further education and employment. In this respect the school is successful and is encouraging all students to have high aspirations. The school gives good value for money.

Students' good behaviour, satisfactory attendance and enjoyment of school confirm that their personal development is good. Pastoral care is very good and underpins the positive relationships found between staff and students.

Throughout the school teaching is good. The best lessons are those that get students talking about, and actively involved in, their learning. Lessons are well organised and students have good attitudes and are keen to learn. There are a few occasions when teaching does not challenge students enough, especially when there is too much input from the teacher in a lesson. There are two areas where teaching is not as effective as it could be. The first is teachers' marking which varies considerably across the school. In some subjects, for example geography, it is good but in some other subjects it is not helping students to understand how well they have done. The second is the use of academic targets. All students have targets but they are not always clear about what they have to do to achieve them.

Because of good teaching, students are making good progress. When they start in Year 7 they are working at standards that are below average. Standards across the school are improving and getting closer to national averages. Having said this, the GCSE results in 2006 were disappointing for the school and the headteacher has robustly challenged staff and students to return to the upward trend of the previous four years. Most students make good progress in their lessons and as a result many are now on course to achieve well in the national tests and GCSE exams. The school recognises the importance of improving results at GCSE especially in English where standards have been lower in comparison to mathematics and science. Work on this has begun by a newly formed teaching staff in the English department.

The school's curriculum is good. The school's special Business and Enterprise status provides opportunities for students to get involved in activities that improve the skills they could use in business and industry. This aspect of the school is developing but has not yet been built into the way other subjects are taught. The expressive arts projects run by the school are good and add to the cultural experiences the students have.

Good leadership and management of the school have effectively brought about improvements to many areas of the school. The headteacher has led this work very skilfully. The senior leadership team (SLT) also play an important role in leading the school forward. The quality of leadership of subject leaders varies. In some cases it is good and contributes to school's drive to raise standards. Governors provide satisfactory support and challenge to the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that students fully understand what they need to do to improve their academic work and reach their targets.
- Improve the consistency and quality of marking.
- Further improve GCSE results, especially in English.
- Increase the opportunities for developing business and enterprise skills across all subjects of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter the school with below average standards. Their literacy skills are particularly weak. Standards across the school have risen during the last three years because good teaching has enabled students to make good progress.

In the Year 9 national tests, although results are below average, there has been an improving trend in performance over the last three years at a rate ahead of the national trend. Students achieve exceptionally well in science to reach the national average. Their attainment in English is below that of the other two tested subjects following staffing difficulties which have now been resolved.

In GCSE examinations, the rising trend in standards was ahead of the national trend until a fall in 2006, when fewer students than expected gained five or more GCSE A* to C grades. In 2005, 46% of candidates gained five or more higher GCSE grades. Students reach the national average in gaining five or more GCSE A* to G grades. In 2006, every student in Year 11 gained GCSE pass grades. Current work indicates further improvement in standards in 2007.

Progress is good in all years. Targets are suitably challenging and usually reached, although some specialist school targets were missed at Key Stage 4 in 2006. Progress seen in lessons is good.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress and all gain GCSE qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well being is good and they demonstrate a strong sense of community and loyalty to their school. Students respond well to the highly inclusive nature of the school and are friendly and helpful to visitors and each other. They mostly feel safe and secure in school and are confident that incidents of bullying or racism are dealt with quickly.

Behaviour is good overall. Good links with external agencies contribute to the high quality work of the Inclusion unit when catering for students at risk of exclusion. This has meant the number of students with fixed period exclusions has reduced. However, the number of students with permanent exclusions has increased over the current year.

Students enjoy the opportunity to contribute their views in class but many still lack the confidence to take their learning forward. There is a very good take up rate for the many activities provided by the school. Students enjoy contributing to the local community. They are pleased that the ideas they have had to improve the environment as members of the local council, for example by promoting litter picking days and improving road safety outside the school, have been acknowledged and acted on. They can also provide instances which demonstrate how their decision making has had an impact upon improving the quality of school life, such as music in the dining hall at lunchtime.

Raising the profile of attendance has been an issue with a small number of students for a long time, but because of positive approaches and swift intervention procedures, attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good. The large number of students choosing to eat healthy food in school and take part in sporting activities reflects their good awareness of the need to follow a healthy lifestyle. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The school recognises that students have a limited understanding of what it means to live in multicultural Britain and are pleased that so many students, especially boys, have taken up opportunities for Asian dance. Students are well prepared for future employment and the next stage in their education. Students also make good progress in developing skills needed for the world of work through taking part in enterprise activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and ensures that students learn successfully and make good progress. Lessons are most successful when teachers engage students in talking about the learning they experience in order to deepen their understanding. In these situations, teachers' good subject knowledge is used very effectively to challenge students' thinking, draw a response and help students to learn. Consequently, students become very interested, find the learning worthwhile and enjoy the lessons.

Teachers have good control of their classes and lessons are orderly because relationships are good and students have considerable respect for teachers.

Teachers have extensive information available on students' prior attainment and, generally, use this effectively to plan lessons and adapt work to meet learners' needs. Teachers usually make clear what is to be learned at the beginning of lessons, and review this with students at the end to reinforce the learning. Occasionally, insufficient time is allowed for review.

In less successful lessons, teachers talk for too long and students are not challenged enough to take the lead in learning for themselves. Marking of work varies in quality and sometimes lacks enough guidance for the students about how to improve. In some subjects marking is erratic and students' work is often left unmarked for long periods of time.

The teaching and learning of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good both in mainstream classes and when they are withdrawn for additional help. As a result they make very good progress and all gain qualifications.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is constructed to meet the needs and aspirations of students of all abilities. It meets statutory requirements, and promotes achievement effectively.

The curriculum has been much improved, in a number of ways, since the previous inspection. The school's Business and Enterprise status, in association with successful and imaginative expressive arts projects, has provided opportunities for students to improve their confidence and develop their entrepreneurial skills. Vocational courses and opportunities for work-related learning have increased and these, together with a well-organised programme of careers education and work experience, ensure that students are properly prepared for their future working lives.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities supports students' development. Catch-up classes, summer schools and university visits enhance their academic experience. Performances, involvement in community events and participation in ethnic minority traditions enrich their cultural and social experience. Citizenship is developed through community involvement, and

media and other business ventures increase their understanding of future employment possibilities. The school's special status, together with expressive arts initiatives, enriches the experience of school students and the wider community, improves students' future employment prospects and is a strength of the school. However, there is a need to develop these further by incorporating business and enterprise principles and practice into all areas of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall but the pastoral care and support students receive is very good. The school is welcoming and has a family ethos of care. Students find staff at all levels in the school approachable and present good and even inspirational role models to them. Procedures to ensure health and safety are meticulous. Students can refer themselves to the school nurse on any confidential personal issues, and the curriculum systematically covers aspects of personal development. Arrangements to support vulnerable students and to safeguard them are clear and meet current requirements. Child protection procedures are widely understood. A well organised system of induction, underpinned by the work of the Inclusion Unit to link with learning mentors in primary schools, ensures a good start for students in Year 7. In addition, peer mentoring ensures that new students gain the support of more established students. Furthermore, because form tutors and Heads of Learning stay with students throughout their time in school, a strong pastoral relationship is built that effectively promotes students' well being. Students with learning difficulties and or disabilities benefit from specialist support assistants in lessons, and the extended pastoral support of the inclusion Unit and special needs department. A parent said 'every effort is made to give my child access to the curriculum and where this has not been suitable, alternatives have been arranged.'

The school has a well thought out system of assessment and tracking of students' progress to identify underachievement and provide support. Students are given targets in each subject but they are not consistently helped to understand what it is they need to do to improve the standards of their work so that they can reach their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Under the leadership of the headteacher the school has improved. When the GCSE results fell in 2006 the headteacher demonstrated his high expectations by sending a clear message to all staff to make sure that standards would rise again this year. Other members of the SLT also effectively lead their key responsibilities which support the school's determination to raise standards.

The school's evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate and clearly identifies where there is need for further improvement. One very incisive tool used for self-evaluation is the 'mini inspections' of subject departments. These are thorough and useful in uncovering what is going well and what needs further improvement. Each 'mini inspection' evaluates standards and achievement and the quality of teaching and provides good pointers for further improvement.

The governors have valued the work of the headteacher and SLT in raising standards. Within the group there are governors who will ask the challenging questions that ensure plans are well thought through.

The improvements made to standards, teaching and the way the school is lead and managed prove that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	2
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?	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?	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	3
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

30 April 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Bolsover School, Mooracre Lane, Bolsover, Chesterfield, S44 6XA

Following the recent inspection of your school I would like to inform you of our findings. The inspection team agreed with your headteacher that your school is a good school. The standards that you reach at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are improving. In 2006 GCSE results were not as good as in 2005 and I know that there are high expectations for those of you in Year 11 to achieve well this year. We agreed with your headteacher's view that standards should rise further especially in English.

The quality of teaching in your school is good. This is especially the case when teachers involve you in discussions and interesting activities that make learning more enjoyable. You have targets in each subject but we found many of you did not understand what you need to do to reach them. The inspection team also found that there are inconsistencies in the way your work is marked. Some of your work is marked well but sometimes marking is not regular enough to ensure you get good feedback on how well you are doing. We have asked your school to improve these things. It would be good if you could respond positively to the improvements they make.

During our visit we were impressed with your good behaviour and the positive attitudes to learning that many of you have. You are making the most of the various extra-curricular activities which all add to the good range of learning experiences that are on offer to you.

As a specialist Business and Enterprise school there are a number of activities that you can get involved in that will help you build up skills that will help you when you get are employed. We have asked your school to have similar activities in other subjects.

Your headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team are working as good leaders and managers. The staff are concerned for your well being and want you to believe in yourselves and have aspirations for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook - Her Majesty's Inspector