

Acland Burghley School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 100053 |
| Local Authority | Camden |
| Inspection number | 307288 |
| Inspection dates | 26–27 March 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Jennifer Brown HMI |

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

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|---|------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 1291 |
| 6th form | 386 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Adam Leys |
| Headteacher | Mr Michael Shew |
| Date of previous school inspection | 15 March 2004 |
| School address | Burghley Road London NW5 1UJ |
| Telephone number | 020 7485 8515 |
| Fax number | 020 7284 3462 |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
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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

Acland Burghley School is a larger than average 11-18 Visual Arts college. It obtained specialist status in 2000. It has a large sixth form, which is part of La Swap sixth form consortium and comprises four schools. A higher proportion of boys compared to girls attend the school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is twice the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average, the largest groups being those with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties, or speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion with statements of special educational needs is nearly four times the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic groups is very high. The school obtained Healthy Schools status in March 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Acland Burghley is a school with many good features where students receive a satisfactory education. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The school enjoys the support of parents, who reported how pleased they were with the quality of education and support their children receive. One parent said, 'Both my children have enjoyed school and achieved good results. Burghley is an inclusive school and doesn't give up on anyone.'

Standards and achievement in 2007 at Key Stages 3 and 4 were satisfactory, as they have been for the last three years. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in some standards at Key Stage 4, notably the percentage of students achieving five higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics, and standards in music. However, the school has had variable success in achieving its statutory targets and those for its specialist status areas. Evidence seen during the inspection indicates that, because of robust academic monitoring, good teaching and well-targeted interventions, students in Year 11 are now making good progress, and GCSE standards are predicted to rise in 2008. However, at Key Stage 3, the picture is more mixed and standards and achievement remain satisfactory overall.

Teaching and learning are generally good. Lessons are well structured and teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and enjoy positive relationships with their students. Consequently, students have good attitudes to learning in most lessons and behaviour is good. In some lessons, teachers spend too much time talking and do not actively engage students sufficiently in their learning to maximise their enjoyment and achievement. Temporary staff changes, beyond the control of the school, in some curriculum areas have affected the quality of teaching and learning for a period, impacted on achievement, and placed additional pressures on managers.

The school's specialist status has had a beneficial effect on students' learning experiences both through the breadth of the curriculum and the constructive links developed with working artists and the wider community. These are having a positive effect on students' personal and social well-being, which are good. Behaviour is good and a tribute to both the students and to the hard work undertaken by the staff to implement the school's behaviour policy consistently. Many students make very a good contribution to the school and the wider community it serves by acting as 'peer mentors' for other students and through their contribution to the school's decision-making processes. Staff have worked hard to improve attendance, which is now satisfactory: however attendance in the sixth form remains too low. A high proportion of students arrive after the start of morning registration and some students are late to their lessons.

The personal guidance students receive is very good and effective use is made of external agencies to help them overcome difficulties. Vulnerable students respond well to rewards, links with peer mentors, and to the positive relationships with their teachers. Academic guidance is good but students do not consistently receive sufficient guidance from all teachers on how to improve their work or on how individual tasks measure up to their targets.

Leadership and management are good and the school has good capacity to improve. Managers at all levels have placed a strong focus on raising standards and improving students' progress. Good systems are being implemented for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. However, managers' feedback to teachers does not consistently highlight strategies to maximise student progress in lessons. New systems and structures have strengthened academic monitoring and are beginning to have a positive effect in some areas such as English at Key Stage 3 and

the percentage of students who are on track to attain five higher grade GCSEs in the 2008 examinations. Governance is satisfactory, but governors have not given sufficient priority and urgency to ensuring the school meets its statutory requirements for religious education.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Acland Burghley School is part of La Swap sixth form consortium, which comprises four schools. Good quality provision is leading to improving standards and students achieve well. The schools collaborate effectively through a well-established partnership, but overall strategic planning for the consortium lacks rigour.

Students in the sixth form are confident, mature and articulate ambassadors for the school. They attain above average standards in A level examinations and this represents good achievement. Their personal development is good overall, however their attendance, though improved, remains too low.

The teaching and learning are good. Teachers utilise a blend of active learning activities and independent work that caters for the needs of all students. Consequently, they make good progress in lessons. Outstanding practice in media studies involves students, their peers and their teacher in assessing and evaluating assignments and identifying appropriate areas for improvement.

The curriculum is good. Students can access an extensive range academic courses selection through the La Swap consortium. In addition, there is a small, but increasing number of vocational courses on offer at levels 1 and 2. Students also participate in the extra-curricular programme the consortium provides. In addition to the consortium offer, the school uniquely offers a tailored course of GCSE qualifications to enable students to acquire the entry requirements for A level study. Students receive good guidance about their higher education and good academic tracking systems are in place to identify and deal with underperformance.

The director of the sixth form provides good charismatic leadership and management. Day-to-day running is effective in meeting students' welfare and academic needs, and ensures they achieve their potential. In the words of one student, 'Acland Burghley is a place where teachers care'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Secure the momentum of improvement in standards and achievement.
- Ensure all teachers consistently involve students in a range of learning activities to enhance their enjoyment and achievement.
- Ensure managers at all levels strengthen the quality of feedback to teachers on the strategies to maximize student progress in lessons.
- Improve attendance and punctuality, at the start of the day and at lessons, throughout the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's judgement that standards and achievement are satisfactory is correct. Over the last three years, it has had variable success in achieving its statutory targets for both key stages and those for its specialist status subjects. The majority of students enter the school with average levels of attainment in English and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in mathematics and science continue to be average while those in English have been consistently below. Information provided by the school indicates they are on track to be close to average for English in the 2008 tests. Students make satisfactory progress at KS3.

Standards at Key Stage 4 are average overall. Evidence seen during the inspection indicates students in Year 11 are now making good progress and standards are predicted to rise in the 2008 examinations. The percentage of students gaining five higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics improved in 2007. Standards in business studies, communication studies, design and technology, modern languages and history were above average. Standards in art and design and drama, (both specialist status subjects), science, mathematics and physical education (PE) were below the national average in 2007. Students have made satisfactory progress between in Key Stage 4 for the last three years. The most able students, notably boys, achieve well at GCSE. The achievement of most students from minority ethnic groups is satisfactory. However, in 2007 the progress of the small number Bangladeshi students was not as good as that generally. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally make satisfactory progress, but in 2007 those with a statement, or at school action plus on the school's special educational needs register, made poorer progress compared to most other students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are proud of their school and value the friendships they make with young people from a wide range of ethnic groups. A well-structured behaviour management system, 'praise, warning, concern', is consistently used by staff. Students' behaviour is good; students feel safe in school and are clear about how they should behave towards others. Many students make a very good contribution to the school and wider community through, for example, acting as peer counsellors. The processes of interviews and training they go through, to undertake this role, makes a positive contribution to their personal development and helps to prepare them for the world of work. These students successfully help more vulnerable students, transferring from primary schools, to settle into the school. Initiatives, such as links to a school in Ghana and raising money for various charities, develop students' understanding of the diverse society in which they live.

Staff have worked hard to improve attendance at the school and punctuality both to morning registration and to lessons. However, the low attendance and poor punctuality of some students remains an area of concern and does not enable them to develop habits beneficial to their future economic well-being. A pilot project in Year 8, using the electronic registration system, has proved very effective in enabling issues about punctuality and attendance in lessons to be followed up quickly and is to be extended to all year groups. Students have a good knowledge

of how to keep themselves healthy. Most are enthusiastic about the wide range of physical activities on offer after school and participation levels are high.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning are generally good. Well established frameworks of classroom discipline enable effective learning to take place and students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Teachers communicate lesson objectives well so that students know what they are expected to do. In the majority of lessons, planning is effective in creating opportunities for independent and collaborative work and engaging students in a variety of activities that ensures good progress. In some lessons, students' progress is limited by the lack of enjoyment that stems from a passive learning atmosphere in class. This is the consequence of too many teacher-led presentations and of students being given too few opportunities to express themselves fully, or to engage in active learning experiences.

During the inspection some teachers were observed to be making very effective use of learning support assistants in class. For example, in a Year 7 Spanish lesson the teacher and assistant communicated in Spanish and modeled for the students the activity they were going to carry out. However, more widely, learning support assistants and individual education plans are not always used effectively enough in lessons to support the progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Curriculum provision is good. Students in Years 7 to 9 have access to a broad curriculum enhanced by specialist areas of dance and drama taught as separate subjects. The school has developed a wide range of academic and vocational options, including work related off-site provision to meet the diverse needs of students in Years 10 and 11. The planned introduction of a BTEC course in Performing Arts is designed to strengthen the vocational element of the Key Stage 4 curriculum in preparation for the school's lead of the Creative and Media diploma within the authority. Although not all students are currently taught information and communication technology (ICT) as a subject in Year 11, students receive their entitlement through subject areas. Changes to the curriculum structure means students in Year 11 are the last group to receive no religious education, although they have covered the agreed syllabus by the end of Year 10. There are appropriate opportunities for students to develop their awareness of the world of work. Large numbers of students participate in an extensive and varied range of extra-curricular activities.

The school's specialist status in visual arts has made a significant impact upon the curriculum and within the community. The school celebrates its specialist status work with an annual arts week and students' artwork is proudly displayed around the school and on its website. The media department is highly active in promoting the use of new technology as a medium for communication.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The development of interventions for learners with behavioural, emotional and social needs and for those with learning difficulties is a strength of the school. Management systems for identifying students at risk and linking together a range of strategies and support, from both within and outside the school, are outstanding. Regular Inclusion Group meetings for year groups ensure that staff work with outside agencies to develop a range of integrated support to students.

Academic guidance is good. Very good systems and structures have been introduced to identify students who are underachieving and they then receive appropriately targeted interventions. Year 11 mock examination results indicate these actions are beginning to have a positive effect on raising students' achievement in the upper school. Students' work is marked regularly, but the quality of marking and feedback is inconsistent. Most teachers give helpful guidance on the next steps that students need to take to improve their work, but marking by some teachers is perfunctory and gives students insufficient information about how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school is effectively led and managed. The headteacher has a clear vision of creating a sense of community and inclusion within the school, which he is doing successfully, with the support of the senior team and middle managers. The management of pastoral care and behaviour is a notable strength, and good links with outside agencies ensure the inclusion of all students.

Recent innovations for the training and empowering of all middle leaders, combined with improved systems for performance management, are ensuring that staff at all levels understand their responsibilities and areas of accountability. These developments, together with the sharper focus of on improving teaching and learning, are beginning to bear fruit and the school is able to demonstrate signs of improvement.

Systems for self evaluation at all levels are robust and give senior and middle managers an accurate overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the priorities for improvement. Development planning is very good. The professional development of staff is given a high priority, and leaders are aware of the need to continue to monitor robustly the effectiveness of training on the quality of teaching in order to raise levels of progress for all students.

Financial management is good and the school uses its specialist school status funds wisely to benefit students and the local community. Governors are very well informed on how the school is performing overall. While the school's safeguarding procedures are secure, governors have not kept themselves as well appraised of this aspect of the school's work as they have in other areas.

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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 |
|---|----------------|-------|

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 | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 | 2 |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 2 |
| 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 | |
| The attendance of learners | 3 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 | |
| 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? | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| 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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 | |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 | |
| 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 | 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

16 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Acland Burghley School, London, NW5 1UJ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome and for the way in which you shared your views with us, both in formal and informal meetings and within lessons. You are clearly proud of your school. You told us how much you appreciate the sport activities at the school and the facilities of the new performing arts block. You like the fact you can make friends with other students from a wide variety of ethnic groups at the school. You appreciate the good relationships you have with your teachers, their friendliness and the support they give you. You attend a school that has many good features, including the sixth form, and provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. We were particularly impressed by:

- the way in which the headteacher, with the support of senior staff, has been successful in creating a sense of community and inclusion in the school
- the contribution many of you make to the school and wider community by acting as peer mentors or being active members of the school council and other student groups
- the quality of care and support you receive when you are experiencing difficulties
- the arrangements the school has with other local schools to give sixth form students a wide range of academic choices.

To make your school better we have recommended that:

- the standards you achieve by the time you are 14 improve
- the improvement in the standards you achieve by the time you are 16 continue
- teachers consistently use a range of activities in lessons that get you involved and help you enjoy learning and achieve the best you can
- after watching a lesson, managers should clearly feedback to teachers the methods they should use to make sure you all make the best progress possible
- your attendance at school and punctuality both to lessons and at the start of the day improves.

The headteacher has been working very hard with other staff to improve the quality of education at the school. You must also play your part by attending school regularly and being punctual. It is also important that you show maturity and cooperate with your teachers when they are trying out new approaches to make learning more interesting and enjoyable.

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making our visit so enjoyable and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector