

Bedford High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106523
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309154
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2008
Reporting inspector	John Ashton

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	1027
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Whitehead
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Preston
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
School address	Manchester Road Leigh Lancashire WN7 2LU
Telephone number	01942 760032
Fax number	01942 760034

Age group	11-16
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2008
Inspection number	309154

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bedford High School is larger than most secondary schools. Formed from the amalgamation of two schools many years ago it occupies a large site. Higher than average numbers of students are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average but the proportion with a statement of special need is higher than average. The number of students who join or leave the school at other than the usual times is higher than average. A small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly from Eastern Europe, are at an early stage of learning English. The college gained specialist business and enterprise specialist status in 2003. It has a number of other awards including the Sportsmark, Artsmark, Investors in People, Healthy Schools Award and Work Related Learning status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bedford High School provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education.

It has a number of strengths, chief among which are the innovative curriculum the students experience, and the good care, support and guidance they receive throughout the school, which is reflected in good student attitudes.

Standards are below, and in some respects significantly below, the national average on entry into Year 7. Students' progress across Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory but it picks up in Years 10 and 11 and is satisfactory overall by the time students leave the school. In 2007 an above average proportion of students gained at least five higher grade GCSE passes, although significantly below average numbers managed to achieve this including both English and mathematics. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and the school recognises a stronger emphasis on what students are expected to learn is needed. Students are not yet involved actively enough in their own learning.

Students' personal development and well-being are good throughout the school.

Their knowledge of healthy lifestyle choices is good. They are heavily involved in sport. Their contribution to the school and wider community is strong. On the whole, students are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Everyone connected with the school agrees that students are well cared for pastorally. The school's increasingly effective monitoring and academic guidance systems are now making it easier to guard against student underachievement. The curriculum is good overall and some aspects of it are outstanding. One of these outstanding aspects is the result of the school's specialist status, the strong focus on enterprise across the whole curriculum. Another is the splendid extra-curricular provision the school offers its students.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, although some aspects of senior leadership are good. Subject leadership is much improved since the last inspection. Day-to-day management is good. Governors are more involved in the monitoring of the school's performance than they used to be and now provide considerable challenge as well as support to the school. The first two priorities in the school's development plan are the improvement of students' achievement and the development of strategies for improving their learning. To this end, the monitoring of classroom practice is focused and leads to effective support for individual teachers. The school knows identifying and sharing what constitutes good learning with the whole staff, and how to consistently bring this about by allowing students to take more responsibility for their own learning is a priority.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise students' overall achievement, especially at Key Stage 3.
- Involve students more actively in their own learning.
- Focus the school's monitoring and professional development activities more sharply on improving students' learning across 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

Standards overall are below average. Students make satisfactory progress overall from the time they enter the school in Year 7 through to when they leave in Year 11. Students make better progress at Key Stage 4 than they do at Key Stage 3. Girls make much better progress than boys on the whole, particularly at Key Stage 4. The proportion of students leaving with at least five higher GCSE grades has improved in recent years to above the national average, although the proportion with five higher grades, which includes both English and mathematics, has remained stubbornly well below average.

There is compelling evidence that this year's GCSE results will be better in English and mathematics and also in science. The results of GCSE assessments already completed indicate this. Reasons for this improvement include some strengthening in the quality of teaching and learning and in the increasing effectiveness of the leadership in these departments, which is also evident in other departments. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve in line with other students, reflecting recent improvements in the coordination of provision for these students. Specialist college targets have largely been achieved. The school copes well with a larger than average influx of students from other schools and countries, at other than the usual starting times. This does have a negative effect on standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good overall. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, especially their social development. This is well developed through a range of opportunities that encourage leadership and participation in activities to promote community cohesion. Most students behave well but a minority can be disruptive. The school is tackling this well, with a great deal of success. Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. Students respond well to the school's healthy eating initiatives. They remain on the school site throughout lunchtime and are beginning to make more healthy choices in the school canteen. They are polite and helpful to visitors and speak positively and with confidence about their experiences at the school. Leadership is successfully promoted through the Junior Sports Leaders Award, with 85 students from Years 10 and 11 helping to arrange sports festivals for primary pupils. 'This gives us more confidence and chances to develop our skills outside the classroom,' said one enthusiastic sports leader. Students are well prepared for the world of work, another spin-off from the school's specialist status, and older students are introduced to many of the skills they will require in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, ensuring that most students make at least satisfactory progress in lessons. Although there is evidence of good practice, this is not consistent across all subjects and all teachers. Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and are able to use this to plan clearly structured lessons, but this is not always reflected in delivery. For example, cross-curricular links and strategies for supporting literacy, although included in planning, are not always evident in the lessons. Where teaching is at its

best, learning objectives and outcomes are shared with the students, and regular assessment provides them with the next steps for improvement which enable them to take responsibility for their own learning. In such lessons, there is effective questioning which extends the more able students, and challenges them to explain and develop their ideas. A good range of activities is provided, and work is well matched to the needs of students. As a result they are motivated, engaged and behaviour is good.

However, there is still too much teaching and learning that is less successful. In such cases, the emphasis tends to be on the teaching and the delivery, rather than on the impact on the learner. As a result, lessons are too teacher-directed, and the students are too passive, which limits the progress they make. Tasks are routine, and provide limited opportunity for students to become engaged in their learning through collaborative and/or independent work. Activities are not effectively matched to the needs of all learners, and questioning is closed and directed at a limited number of students, which limits opportunities for effective assessment for learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers' failure to engage and hold the students' interest leads to some students misbehaving.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is good overall and has some outstanding features, one of which is the focus on the demonstration of enterprise capabilities across all subjects and within enterprise lessons. Citizenship education is now well established and effective. In Key Stage 4, there is a broader range of GCSE and more vocational courses than there used to be. Information and communication technology and media courses are very popular and successful. The school plays a full and active role within the local area to offer a comprehensive range of 14-19 pathways in partnership with other schools and providers. The school will offer new diplomas in business administration and creative and media studies from 2009. The curriculum is enhanced by an outstanding range of opportunities. In addition to visits, clubs, sports and arts activities, students are enabled to develop leadership skills through working on schemes such as 'The Young Chamber' and the 'Junior Sports Leaders' Award'. The school's specialist status as a business and enterprise college has been an effective catalyst for change and curriculum innovation. An innovative programme for a group of targeted of students with behavioural and emotional issues is very effective. Good careers education and a very strong focus on work-related learning across the curriculum equip students for the world of work very well. The school works very effectively with the local community to provide basic skills courses for adults and to forge close links with businesses.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Statutory child protection procedures are observed and measures to ensure health and safety are in place. The on-site community police officer visits classes and speaks in assemblies so that students are introduced at an early age to their responsibilities as good citizens. The pastoral system is a strength of the school. Students know who to turn to for advice and help, and as a result they feel safe and secure. Pupil guidance officers are attached to year groups and provide extensive supervision across the site along with advice and guidance for all students. Very good use is made of external agencies. Transition from primary school is smooth and students settle quickly as a result of the strong links and induction processes. Students are generally aware of their targets and the school's monitoring

system ensures that those who underachieve are identified early and helped to improve. There is a good range of adults who are available and willing to assist when youngsters need help, either with their academic work or any other concerns they have. Rewards and celebrations are an integral part of school life and this adds to students' enjoyment of their time at the school. Parents and carers are supportive. A typical parental comment was that, 'Nothing seems too much trouble for the teachers and staff at the school.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but with some significant strengths and some areas for development. Deputy headteachers carry out their roles effectively, and governors provide a good level of support and challenge. After a period of some weakness, the impact of which is still working its way through the school, subject leadership is much improved and is increasingly accountable for the standards and quality within the departments. The school's self-evaluation is accurate in many respects, but over graded in others. The systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning are becoming more robust, but not focusing sufficiently with the whole staff on what is needed to bring about good learning. The school's specialist status has helped in a number of ways. For example, there are good examples of innovative work, particularly in enterprise and work-related experience, as well as extensive links with other colleges and with local industries. Financial management is secure. The capacity to improve is good, demonstrated well by the improvements in most of the issues raised at the last inspection.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	3
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?	3
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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Inspection of Bedford High School, Leigh, WN7 2LU

We enjoyed our recent inspection of your school and would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk to us. A special thank you should go to those students who gave up part of their lunchtime to meet us.

Different groups of you told us, amongst other things, that behaviour is better now than it used to be, and that the new timetable and lunchtime arrangements have a lot to do with that. You told us also about the very good range of extra activities there are to choose from and how well looked after you are in school, mentioning, for example, how accessible the new pupil guidance managers are if you need help. You told us, and your parents appear to agree, that the transition arrangements for pupils transferring from primary school are good and that teachers go out of their way to help you as much as they can, especially now that you are on the run up to the examinations.

We think that your school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education but that some of you are not achieving as well as you should, especially in Years 7 to 9. We have asked the school to address this. We have also asked the school's managers to encourage your teachers to include more opportunities for you to be more active in lessons and to take more responsibility for your own learning.

On behalf of the inspectors we wish you all every success in the future.