

# Brinsworth Comprehensive School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106960
<b>Local Authority</b>	Rotherham
<b>Inspection number</b>	309274
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Honoree Gordon HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1434
6th form	192
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr F Pickering
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mike Gray
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Brinsworth Road Brinsworth Rotherham South Yorkshire S60 5EJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01709 828383
<b>Fax number</b>	01709 835937

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: students' achievement; the impact of being a specialist school; the work to promote community cohesion; and the curriculum, in particular the new, modified curriculum for Year 8 students.

Inspectors gathered evidence from scrutinising data relating to achievement and from the documentation the school provided as part of its self-assessment processes. The inspectors conducted interviews with groups of students and with key members of staff, including the headteacher, and observed a few lessons. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Brinsworth Comprehensive School is a large school which draws on communities of widely differing cultural backgrounds and where there is said to be considerable racial tension. The largest minority ethnic group is Pakistani. Many of the students are from areas of social deprivation. Over one fifth have learning difficulties or disabilities. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The school was designated a specialist science college in 2003.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Brinsworth Comprehensive is an outstanding school. It has each individual pupil at the heart of everything it does. The students come from sections of the community which have very different cultural and racial backgrounds and amongst which there is said to be much historic tension. The school does an excellent job of promoting community cohesion. It works in an active way with the students, their families and communities to enable the students to get on well together and to grow in understanding and tolerance of one another's cultural and religious beliefs. As a result, the atmosphere in school is one in which real learning can take place and where the students grow up with positive attitudes and values which will stand them in good stead when they leave school.

Students feel confident that the school takes a robust stand on racial discrimination, but that this focus should remain. The questionnaires returned by parents show that the vast majority are satisfied with the education that their children receive. Only a very small minority expressed concern over racism, bullying, or fighting. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that the school policies for bullying are clear. They can approach staff to deal with this if it occurs and that problems are usually confined to verbal conflict between two individuals.

Behaviour is good. Teachers manage this well. Where teachers are new or less secure in this, they are well supported by their subject departments and senior leaders to develop effective techniques. Pupils generally behave well because teaching is good and the teachers make their lessons interesting and relevant. Students particularly appreciate the outstanding support and guidance they receive from teachers and assistants. As a result, they make good progress.

Data show that students' achievement is good compared to other schools operating in similar circumstances. Standards are average, and on a continuing upward trend. Standards are better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. The school has successfully improved its results at Key Stage 4 as this is where it has been concentrating its efforts. In some subjects standards are well above average, for example in science and in modern foreign languages (MFL). Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are outstanding.

Standards vary too much across subjects. The school is keen not to restrict students' choice. This means that results in a few subjects do not compare favourably with others. For example, the statistics course is designed with average ability students in mind and is popular. Where results at public examinations are weaker, such as in geography, this has usually been related to discontinuity in staffing, or variable teaching quality. The proportion of students gaining top grades (A\*/A) varies across subjects.

Subject leaders conduct a detailed analysis of results and senior leaders intervene decisively to effect improvement. For example in English, GCSE results have risen, the department has clear strategies for further improvement and actions are already underway. This focus has now extended to improving Key Stage 3 also.

The school has a very effective programme for staff development, focused on continuous improvement. Good practice is being shared across subjects, led by the science department and other high-achieving subject departments. For example, teachers learn how to prepare well-structured lessons and consider how ICT could be used more in lessons to motivate students and enhance their learning. Team work is both enthusiastic and effective.

For many subjects, students are grouped by ability and in some cases class sizes are small. This means that students are able to be successful, even if for some students this is in small steps. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. They, too, make good progress. The progress of minority ethnic pupils is good, especially that of Pakistani boys.

High ability students do very well in several subjects but in a few they underachieve. The school has introduced more challenge and closer tracking of their progress. These students' predicted grades show that these initiatives are already having a very positive impact.

The curriculum is good, and has several outstanding features. These include the provision for science and for MFL, and the study support and guidance programmes. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. The personal, social and health education programme was judged to be good when it was inspected in 2006. An exchange link with a school in Zanzibar helps to promote students' cultural awareness and understanding.

The school judges its curriculum to be outstanding, but for less able or less motivated students the pathways they can choose are too limited. There are few vocational subjects. The examination load for some students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is heavy.

The modified curriculum for Year 8 introduced in September 2007 is popular with the students and is resulting in more positive attitudes to learning. Students say that they are able to concentrate and listen better and that they find they enjoy school more. This curriculum is offered on a half-termly rota basis to small groups of students at a time and includes practical activities such as gardening, cooking and outdoor pursuits. The school is keen to extend what it learns from this successful initiative, to be able to introduce a wider range of subject pathways to students which will lead to useful qualifications or further study, alongside GCSEs.

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. The school has robust systems in place for evaluating how it is doing and has shown it has outstanding capacity to improve further. The school is constantly looking at how it can improve. Teams of academic and pastoral staff work closely together to ensure that ideas turn into action. The headteacher has empowered middle managers to drive forward improvements in their own areas. For example standards in GCSE English have risen, and provision in the sixth form has improved and expanded. The school has identified appropriate priorities for the future and has set itself suitably challenging targets. Governance is good.

The science specialism has been used most effectively to drive up standards and to lead the way in teaching and learning. Many students gain top grades at GCSE in science and go on to study science subjects in the sixth form. Students particularly appreciate the improved facilities and resources and the way that teachers use interactive technologies in science, and in some other subjects, to make the lessons really interesting. Primary schools gain from the extensive links and sharing of expertise to lay solid foundations in science at primary school.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The sixth form is outstanding. The school is particularly responsive to students' views and, as a result, the number of students has grown year on year. Students' achievement is good. Examination results at A and AS level are above national average and continue to improve. The proportion of high grade A/B passes in 2007 rose considerably, compared to 2006, and now

represents over one third of all passes. Standards across subjects vary, with strong subjects such as biology, art and modern foreign languages, but also one or two weaker subjects.

The curriculum is outstanding. The Intermediate Year programme is a particular strength. Students who have not attained the usual level required for entry to a sixth form have the opportunity to improve their qualifications and to follow courses in life skills. In this way, several students are successfully enabled to progress ultimately into higher education. There is a good enrichment programme for all sixth formers.

The personal development of the students is good. The guidance system is good, tailored well to individuals.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend curriculum opportunities to better meet the broad range of students' needs and abilities.
- Ensure that there is more consistency in standards across different subjects.

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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
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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?	1	1
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	1	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	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	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
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	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing to thank you for your contribution to the recent inspection of your school and to share with you the main findings.

- Your school is outstanding. Well done to all of you, students and staff, for all the hard work which lies behind this!
- You make good progress.
- Your standards in examinations are average overall. Results in some subjects, such as science and modern foreign languages, are good. ICT is outstanding.
- The curriculum is good, with particular strengths in science, modern foreign languages and the study support and guidance programmes.
- The new Year 8 modified curriculum is a good initiative, with some interesting practical activities. It has made school more enjoyable for many of you and has given the school some ideas for developing the curriculum in the future.
- The care, guidance and support that the school provides for you are outstanding. You told us how much you appreciate the support and encouragement the teachers and assistants give to you.
- The sixth form is outstanding; it has grown in popularity and achievement is good.

Science specialist college status has made a big difference to your school, especially in improving the standards you reach. We agree with what you told us about the better facilities and opportunities you now have. You also told us that you like the way in which some teachers use ICT to make their lessons interesting.

The work done in school to promote good relationships between the very different communities you come from is outstanding. You told us you were confident that the school deals well with any racism and bullying, but want everyone to keep this still very much in mind. From their questionnaires, it is clear that the vast majority of your parents are happy, but a few remain worried about this.

This is what we have asked the school to consider for the future.

- To look at providing a wider range of interesting courses for you, including some which are more practical, so that everyone has a suitable choice.
- To improve the results in some subjects, because results vary too much from one subject to another.