

Brighouse High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107580
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	309438
Inspection date	14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Mark Wilson

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1321
6th form	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Jones
Headteacher	Mr Graham Soles and acting co-headteacher Mrs E Cresswell
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	Finkil Street Brighouse West Yorkshire HD6 2NY
Telephone number	01484 710408
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the sixth form. They investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, the quality of provision students receive, leadership and management, and the impact of the special status on the whole school. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, relevant policies and observations of the school at work, including visits to lessons and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, students and the chair of governors were also held. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector 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

Brighouse High is an oversubscribed, mixed comprehensive school with a separate sixth form. It serves the wider community of Brighouse and East Calderdale. The school is much larger than average and students come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage, fewer than average are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is also much lower than in most schools. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is slightly higher than average. The school has gained Leading Edge status and the Artsmark Award. It is also the local authority resource centre for visually impaired students; this provision was not inspected.

The school has specialist status in business and enterprise and also in vocational education. From September 2007, the school restructured the leadership team to complement the appointment of an acting co-headteacher to lead the specialisms. The director of the sixth form was appointed in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Brighthouse High is a school of outstanding quality. Indications of why this is an outstanding school are reflected in a typical comment made by students when they said, 'We feel proud to be at this school, we really do well here.'

The outstanding leadership of the school is strongly committed to promoting not only the students' academic achievement but also their personal development. All students whether those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those at the greatest risk of not completing their education are very well provided for. Consequently, students achieve well in their studies but exceptionally so in their personal development.

The school's specialist business and enterprise status pervades all aspects of the school. Outstanding results are gained in business related courses and challenging targets for specialist subjects have been exceeded. The curriculum is richer for the very strong focus on enterprise, with all students being challenged to make a difference in the world. This has also resulted in the students' improved confidence and independent learning skills. It is still too early for the recently gained vocational and Leading Edge status to have had full impact on students' achievement. However, the contribution made by the vocational learning is evident from students' improved awareness of workplace skills, so important for their future employment. Year 6 pupils in partner primary schools benefit from the work the school does with them, getting their enterprise skills off to a strong start when they move to secondary education.

All of these strengths arise through the exceptional leadership and management of the school. This has been made possible by the excellent leadership of the headteacher and acting co-headteacher, strongly supported by the senior leadership team. They all share a very clear vision of how the school can pursue excellence. Strong accountability for improving performance and good self-evaluation are present at all levels. This ensures the focus on students' personal and academic achievement is kept paramount. Good use is made of challenging targets to continue to raise standards. This relentless drive for improvement is well understood by staff and students alike. Outstanding governance means the school's commitment to excellence is maintained. Governors know clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the school and expertly hold it to account. Staff are well motivated and are encouraged and supported to take on more challenging leadership roles.

The school's finances are exceptionally well managed to provide outstanding value for money. The outcome of this is demonstrated by the students' improving achievement and the school's effective improvement since the last inspection. Consequently, the capacity of the leadership team to innovatively drive the school forward is outstanding. Very strong systems ensure the school runs very smoothly on a daily basis. Students appreciate and respect the very good learning environment they have, as seen, for example, in the high quality of artwork on display.

Students start Year 7 with broadly average standards and by the end of Year 11 their standards have improved and are above average. Students achieve well because of the good teaching and learning combined with their very helpful attitudes to learning. In its pursuit of excellence and focus on improving achievement, the school has recognised the need to improve teaching further. It is focusing upon, for example, improving the level of challenge for and progress made by some of the more able students.

Students speak very well of the strong relationships between themselves and their teachers. This, they feel, combined with the very good academic support and guidance they receive

enables them to achieve well. Students generally receive good, clear feedback on how well they are doing in their work. Consequently, they are clear on what they have to do to improve to reach their targets.

Students very much enjoy coming to school and their attendance is excellent. They speak of the friendly atmosphere around school or, as some students put it, 'the best thing about this school is the people in it'. Students' behaviour is exemplary, both in lessons and around the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and students take full advantage of a vast range of extra-curricular activities. Students are well aware of the importance of the need for a healthy lifestyle and this is very well supported through the school's work towards the Healthy Schools award.

The quality of the curriculum, especially in Years 10 and 11 is exemplary. The school has worked very hard to develop a range of varied learning opportunities. These are very much focused on meeting the needs of the individual student rather than providing a 'one size fits all' approach. To this end, there are excellent opportunities available to students when they enter Year 10. The different pathways provide a comprehensive range of academic and vocational learning to choose from. Students receive strong, supportive guidance when choosing the options open to them. Consequently, they feel confident that they have made the right decision and that they are able to achieve well. This has resulted in the very low rate of disengagement and the development of an ethos where students can and do succeed well. Very good enrichment activities are used to consolidate the learning students make in lessons.

The school places very strong emphasis on the importance of each individual student and provides excellent pastoral support for all. This is especially so for the more vulnerable, who flourish and develop a much greater confidence and enjoyment in learning. Students receive much encouragement from teachers and particularly appreciate the relaunched and improved rewards scheme which offers incentives to students who try hard. Very good systems for monitoring students' progress are well established in Years 10 and 11 and have recently been improved in Years 7 to 9. These arrangements allow teachers to identify where students are falling behind in their learning and take suitable action to overcome any problems and boost their achievement. Child protection procedures meet statutory requirements.

The school works very well with parents and has their overwhelming support. This is clearly shown through comments such as, 'I wish I could have gone to this school'. Similarly outstanding links with the wider community range from those with the local colleges and schools to those in other countries. These links contribute very strongly to the students' personal development.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

This is a good sixth form where students flourish in a supportive and friendly atmosphere. Students particularly value the more adult environment that their location, separate from the main school, provides and are excited about the new Mulberry Centre with its excellent resources for independent learning.

The 'open access' policy for entry to the school means that, overall, students begin the sixth form with GCSE results that are below average for the beginning of Year 12. By the end of Year 13, students reach average standards; hence their achievement is good. This is largely the result of good teaching and a curriculum that offers a good range of academic and vocational subjects. However, students' positive and conscientious attitudes to learning are also an important factor. Students' personal development is good and they value, for example, the Faith Days and the

range of overseas visits that help to deepen their understanding and broaden their experiences of life. Nevertheless, the school is aware that opportunities for learning beyond students' examination courses are limited, notably in a shortage of physical education activities.

Care, support and guidance for students are good. Pastoral care is particularly strong. However, students find the targets set for them in the various subjects often lack clarity and rigour. Therefore, the monitoring of students' progress in relation to those targets is not as effective as it might be in identifying any underachievement and getting students back 'on track' in order to raise standards. New arrangements for the leadership and management of the sixth form have already produced improvement on several fronts and detailed planning indicates a determination to raise standards further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the monitoring of students' progress, in relation to challenging targets, in order to raise standards in the sixth form.

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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	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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
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?	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

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?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	2
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	2	
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	2	
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	1	
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

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you offered us when we inspected your school. We very much appreciated talking to you in your lessons, around school and in our meetings, this was very helpful. I would like to share with you what we agreed upon about your school.

Brighouse High is an outstanding school where you say you are proud to belong. The leaders of the school are very committed to you in ensuring you get the very best from the school. In the main school this leadership and management is outstanding, as is the curriculum they provide for you.

Very importantly, the personal development you make in the main school is outstanding. The majority of you demonstrate excellent behaviour and have formed very happy working relationships between yourselves and with your teachers.

The main school provides exceptional care, guidance and support, valuing you all highly as individuals. We heard through our discussions how you really feel part of one big, friendly family and so you really enjoy your time at school.

Results in the GCSE examinations are above average; with all students gaining at least one GCSE pass and the vast majority gaining five or more GCSE passes. You make good progress because of the good quality of teaching you receive and your very helpful attitudes to learning.

We know how much you enjoy learning at Brighouse High. To ensure this continues we have asked the school to improve the monitoring of students' progress in the sixth form against their targets. This will help raise standards; especially if students not doing as well as expected can work with their teacher to get back on track.

We wish you all the very best for the future.