

Bishop Heber High School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 111424 |
| Local Authority | Cheshire |
| Inspection number | 310595 |
| Inspection dates | 5–6 March 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Sue Harrison HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 1025 |
| 6th form | 168 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Michele Walker |
| Headteacher | Mr David Curry |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 March 2004 |
| School address | Chester Road Malpas Cheshire SY14 8JD |
| Telephone number | 01948 860571 |
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|--------------------------|----------------|
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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

Bishop Heber High School serves a socially mixed community centred on the town of Malpas and a large rural area of southwest Cheshire. Two thirds of students come from the school's rural catchment area and a third from other parts of Cheshire, Shropshire and Wales. Almost all the pupils are White British. The school has below average numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Overall, students enter the school with attainment that is slightly above average based on their performance in national Key Stage 2 assessments. The school gained specialist status for languages in 1997 and its application for redesignation in 2007 was successful. The school was awarded the International Schools Award by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in October 2007. There is substantial community use of the school's facilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Students achieve above average results in public examinations and make good progress in most subjects. In a few subjects, where progress has been satisfactory rather than good, the school is taking action to address this and inspectors saw evidence of improvement in the current year. The majority of teaching and learning are consistently good. In these lessons teachers are skilled at engaging students' interest and they work hard and enjoy their learning. In a few lessons the teaching is less skilful and progress is slower.

The personal development and well-being of students are good. The majority of students are happy at the school: they are well cared for and enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. Attendance is good. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. The curriculum is good and the modern languages specialism is well used to enhance the extra-curricular programme of trips and activities. The school recognised issues in the way the curriculum was delivered in some subjects, for example modern languages and information and communication technology (ICT), and has introduced changes which are leading to better progress in those subjects. Guidance and support are good, although not all students are sufficiently aware of what they need to do to further improve their work. This is because the quality of marking varies across the school. The school's partnerships with other organisations work well in terms of developing the curriculum to better suit the needs of individuals, and to provide good quality care and guidance.

Leadership and management are good. The school has experienced a period of change in recent years in terms of senior and middle management roles. Leaders are rigorous in their evaluation of where the school has weaknesses as well as strengths. Governors support the school well and hold the senior team to account. The majority of parents are very positive about the school. However, a minority of parents are not satisfied with particular aspects, for example changes to staffing and the behaviour of a small minority of the students. Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection, for example within ICT. Students' progress in English has improved in the current year and is now good. There are still a small number of subjects where students are not performing to the best of their ability. Actions are being taken, for example the programme of training for middle managers, but these have not had time to show sufficient impact. However, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the school has good capacity to bring about further improvements. Resources to support learning are satisfactory and are well managed. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and students are very positive about their experience in the sixth form. They make good progress in the majority of subjects. Examination results are good. In 2007, 42% of all grades awarded in GCE A-level examinations were high grades. The school has effective links with other providers and students receive good advice and guidance to help them choose courses and to move on after the sixth form; a high proportion progress to their first choice of university. There is effective personal development and well-being. During their time in the sixth form students get involved in a wide range of activities outside lessons and speak animatedly about these, especially the annual revue! Sixth formers make a very positive contribution to the school and the wider community. They are encouraged to participate in the running of the school and many help younger students. The sixth form committee and school

council provide useful vehicles for students to feedback their ideas to managers. The sixth form is inclusive; although the majority of students study for GCE AS/A-level qualifications, there is also provision at Levels 1 and 2. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Retention is high and the school analyses carefully the reasons why any student leaves before finishing a course. On the few courses where progress is less than good, action plans are in place to bring about improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve progress in the few subjects that are under-performing.
- Improve the consistency and quality of assessment of student work.
- Ensure professional development for middle managers is effective across the whole school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Student achievement is good. Students join the school in Year 7 with just above average standards for their age. They make good progress overall up to the end of each key stage, but progress is not equally good in all subjects. For example, in 2007, students in the national tests in Year 9 attained standards significantly above the national average in mathematics and science, but only broadly average standards in English. In 2007, students in Year 11 attained significantly better than average GCSE results overall, but there were concerns about lower than expected results in a few subjects, including some modern languages.

The school has convincing evidence from its tracking of student progress that current students are making good progress in most subjects; this was confirmed by inspectors' classroom observations. Those subjects where some students underachieved in the past are being well supported and have detailed and effective action plans which are improving things rapidly. For example, reasons for the relative under-performance in English language have been accurately diagnosed and are being energetically followed up. Student progress in this subject is now good.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making as much progress as their peers due to the good support they receive, and because they are often taught in small groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Students feel secure in school and value the support of their teachers. They say that they enjoy their time in school and that any concerns they have are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's language specialism provides many opportunities for students to experience aspects of other cultures. For example, there are numerous visits to other countries including France, Spain, Germany, USA and China, as well as foreign students spending time at Bishop Heber. Through the personal, social, health and citizenship programme, students are prepared for life in a multicultural society.

Attendance is above the national average and the school works hard to ensure that non-attendance is confronted. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is generally good.

A few parents expressed concern about the behaviour of a minority of students. Overall, students are considerate and have a good understanding of acceptable conduct. There is an effective school council, which has had an impact on the school's management. For example, it wrote the basic classroom expectations which govern student behaviour. The school canteen offers healthy options, which the majority of students choose. There is good provision for physical education, including a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and sports teams. Participation in these activities is exceptionally high. There are many opportunities for students to contribute to the life of the school community and to work with local charities and organisations. This, along with the good provision of work-related learning, prepares them well for adult working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning in this school are clearly good, with students making good progress in a high proportion of lessons and demonstrating very positive attitudes to their learning. In most lessons teachers are skilful at using a variety of techniques to help students learn. The level of challenge is right for the group and a variety of activities, including individual, paired and class work, enables students to engage fully with the learning. In some lessons teachers make particularly good use of directed questions that help to extend students' thinking skills. There is good use of visual aids to stimulate interest and help students understand the lesson. In a few less effective lessons there is too much emphasis on teacher led instruction, or insufficient classroom control. As a consequence students remain passive or become bored, with some struggling to maintain concentration or interrupting the work of others. The marking of students' work is variable, with some examples of very thorough marking that include detailed comments explaining how to improve further. There are also some good examples of self-assessment and peer marking by students. The school is working to spread this good practice, but this is not yet fully effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of students who mostly achieve high standards, and encourages their personal development. At Key Stage 4 the school has successfully developed vocationally related courses and 20% of students now take these subjects. The timetabling of these courses has improved this year to ensure students attending local colleges do not miss lessons in other subjects. All students benefit from discrete lessons in ICT in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, with many gaining external certification. The languages college specialism enables some students to study two languages at GCSE, and provides opportunities for early examination entry in Year 10. The delivery of modern language provision throughout the school is being reviewed and amended so as to raise standards and more effectively meet individual needs.

In Key Stage 3 a revised scheme of work is enabling literacy skills, and especially reading, to be prioritised. There is also a programme of enterprise education in all years and this has been recently enhanced with a successful bid for external funding.

Students appreciate the opportunities for a wide range of extra-curricula activities, and especially the trips abroad that are a feature of the languages specialism. Take up of school based activities is high, with over 80% of students participating in at least one club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school works hard to meet the needs of individual students. A strong pastoral team coordinates care and support. There are effective strategies in place to manage the needs of vulnerable students and those at risk of exclusion. This includes the inclusion resource centre, which provides respite and intensive support for those students who find it difficult to cope with school life. The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are addressed systematically and flexibly so that these students make good progress. Most parents are pleased with the support their children receive, although a small number are less satisfied. Statutory requirements for child protection and health and safety are in place. Guidance for students who are making option choices at the end of Year 9 is thorough. There is an effective system for tracking the academic progress of students and most now have a clear understanding of their target grades in all subjects. However, not all are fully aware of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The relatively new and increasingly effective senior leadership team is developing a positive and self-critical culture, in which all aspects of the school's provision are seen as open to review and question in order to improve students' learning. Regular and systematic monitoring and self-evaluation is a major part of the work of the school at all levels. Consequently, the school has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning and has taken steps to bring about improvements where necessary. School improvement planning is of good quality and is rightly focused on reaching high standards in students' achievement and well-being. Resources to support learning are satisfactory and are managed effectively. Equality of opportunity is well promoted through the curriculum.

Many of the subject leaders are relatively new in post. They feel well supported by their line managers and thoroughly involved in the monitoring and evaluation of their departments. A training programme is in place for middle managers but this is not yet impacting sufficiently across the whole school. The governing body provides effective levels of challenge as well as support. It has increased its first-hand knowledge of the school through very well-planned governor days, which include attendance at an assembly, discussions with students and attachment to a range of departments for lesson observations. The school has good capacity to improve further, demonstrated by, for example, how well it tackled the issues identified at the last inspection.

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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? | 2 | 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? | 2 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | 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 | 2 | |
| 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 | 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 | 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 | 2 | |
| 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 | |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, your school was recently inspected. Thank you for your warm welcome, your help to us in finding our way around and giving us your views about the school. We really enjoyed visiting your school and I am writing now to tell you about our findings.

We were impressed by the quality of teaching and learning in most of the lessons. You and the staff work hard together and this leads to the above average results the school obtains in public examinations. You make good progress in most subjects. Many of you told us you enjoy coming to school and a high proportion of you take part in activities outside lessons. The modern foreign language specialism has led to a wide range of trips abroad across the curriculum, as well as students from other countries visiting the school. The range of courses you can take has broadened in recent years and the curriculum overall is good. The school is aware that in a few subjects, such as ICT and languages, the curriculum was not meeting the needs of all students and measures are in place to change this. Many of you told us about the good care, guidance and support you receive. Although a few parents are concerned about the behaviour of a minority of students we found behaviour to be good overall and were impressed with your attitudes in most lessons and around the school. Many of you volunteer for additional responsibilities within the school or participate in fundraising for the wider community. The leadership and management of the school undertake regular monitoring of your progress and actions are in place to improve areas of under-performance. Training is in place for subject leaders, many of whom are new in post. We found that most of you are aware of your targets but some of you are less clear about what you need to do to improve further. We have asked the school to:

- raise standards and improve performance in the few subjects where you are not achieving your full potential
- spread good practice in the way your work is marked to help you understand how to improve further
- ensure training for subject leaders is effective across the whole school.