

Bishop Barrington School: A Sports with Mathematics College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114301
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311556
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Joe Clark

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	704
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ray Smith
Headteacher	Mr Bruce Guthrie
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2003
School address	Woodhouse Lane Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 6LA
Telephone number	01388 603307
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average school, serving a mixed area but one that, overall, is socially and economically disadvantaged. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is above average. A high proportion of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are very few minority ethnic students and all students have English as their first language. A small number of Gypsy Roma children attend the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which provides good value for money. Standards are rising year-on-year and are improving at a faster rate than in most other schools. Students achieve well because they are well taught, attend regularly and are generally motivated to learn. Students' personal development is good. The vast majority of students behave well both in class and around the school. They get on with each other and with other adults. They understand the importance of staying safe and trying to live a healthy lifestyle.

Students join the school with standards that are generally below average, especially in reading. Students with the weakest reading skills receive good support, are well taught and make rapid progress in catching up. For most students, progress in reading is not quite so swift because there is no whole-school approach to improving their reading skills. As students move through the school they make good progress overall in their work and by Year 11 are achieving average standards, an improvement from the previous inspection when they were well below average. Standards in mathematics remain below average and need to improve.

Students learn well because lesson activities are interesting, challenging and conducted at a good pace. Students said they enjoy their lessons. Systems of tracking and assessment to help students reach challenging targets in national tests are exceptionally good. The curriculum effectively supports students' learning and there is good progression from school into further education. Specialist college status is having a strong impact in many areas, not least in providing a good and expanding range of extra-curricular sporting activities; participation rates in sport are increasing dramatically.

The pastoral support of students is excellent. Systems for supporting vulnerable and looked after children are used by the local authority as an example of good practice. Students were very emphatic that there is very little, if any, bullying. The school has, for the second consecutive year, been awarded anti-bullying accreditation. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and minority groups such as Gypsy Roma children receive good personal support. Procedures to safeguard children are in place. The use of the 'ucan' centre and achievement centre have helped reduce exclusions and offer good support to disaffected students. Links with other providers and institutions are excellent, including links with Bishop Auckland College and Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College in Darlington.

The senior leadership team is relatively new, but it is having a positive impact in ensuring students continue to achieve well and reach appropriate standards. Under the strong and purposeful leadership of the headteacher, new systems of monitoring the work of the school have been set up and are proving effective in highlighting areas for improvement. Since the previous inspection there has been good progress in several key areas and there is good capacity to improve further. Governance is satisfactory. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise the improvement it is making.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics.
- Increase opportunities in all lessons for students to develop and improve their reading skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and achievement is good. On entry, overall standards are below average. Reading skills are well below average. The latest set of published results in national tests in 2006, indicate that standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 were slightly below average. These results were the highest for several years and represented satisfactory achievement. Challenging targets were met for the first time. Results in mathematics at the end of Year 11, were well below average, a consequence of staffing difficulties now largely resolved. In some subjects, for example, information and communication technology, history, geography and sports studies, examination results are consistently very high. Current standards are the highest they have ever been. The 2007 national test results, though not yet validated, indicate that standards overall are rising faster than the national trend and are now average. Evidence from the inspection, including that from lesson observations, a scrutiny of students' work and the school's own tracking data indicates that students are continuing to make good progress. Gypsy Roma children and other minority groups make good progress. Specialist College Status is having a positive impact in improving standards in physical education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school has a clear philosophy for the personal development of every child and this is evident in the positive attitudes and relationships that pervade the school. Since the previous inspection, attendance, which was very low, has improved and is now average. The behaviour of students, particularly at breaks and lunchtimes and in the dining rooms, is good. In the majority of lessons students behave well. In a small number of classes, a minority of students disrupt the learning of others. Students feel safe. Bullying is not an issue and the school is rightly proud of achieving anti-bullying accreditation for the second year. Students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good. Students pride themselves in their positive contribution to the wider community. They generously support a range of local and national charities, for example, Butterwick Hospice. They value the good range of opportunities to take responsibility. Students are confident that their views are taken seriously and they are proud of their effectiveness in bringing about improvements in school, for example, through the Bistro. Students are developing a good awareness of the importance of a healthy and safe lifestyle. A large number are involved in sport, dance and performing arts events after school. Students acquire good social skills and enterprise skills which prepare them well for the world of work but mathematical skills are not yet high enough to secure their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students have an enjoyable and stimulating learning experience because teaching is largely good and, in some cases, outstanding. In the most effective lessons observed, pace, challenge, good subject knowledge and a variety of teaching strategies effectively contribute to the good progress made by learners. In a small number of mixed-ability classes, tasks are not planned to ensure students of all abilities make the same good progress. In a few lessons, teachers talk too much and learning suffers. In these lessons, students can become restless and misbehave.

Teachers provide good opportunities for students to think for themselves. Good assessment and marking are having a positive impact on progress. Students who have very low reading skills are well taught and make good progress. However, all students would benefit from a greater whole school emphasis on reading. Teaching assistants provide effective support and are well deployed in lessons. The teaching of mathematics has been adversely affected by staffing difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides good opportunities for all students to enjoy a curriculum relevant to their needs, helping them to make progress and enjoy their education. The two GCSE pathways provide a good choice of academic and vocational qualifications and are leading to higher standards. More able and talented students have access to additional activities in collaboration with the local cluster of schools which challenge and extend this group of students further. Students with learning difficulties receive good curriculum support. Transition arrangements at all key stages are good. Students involve themselves in a wide variety of enterprise activities benefiting themselves and the local community. The school provides students with a range of activities outside the normal school day which enrich the curriculum and contribute much to students' enjoyment and achievement. The school's status as a specialist college has significantly improved participation in sport out of lessons whilst almost half of students leaving school next year will have some form of accreditation in physical education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Teachers and other adults are dedicated in supporting and valuing all students whatever their ability or background. The care they provide is outstanding, particularly for vulnerable and looked-after children. This is recognised by many parents. 'My son has had a few problems settling at school but had amazing back-up and help from all members of staff'. Students with learning difficulties and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties receive effective support, especially in the achievement centre and through the ucan provision. Arrangements for child protection and the safeguarding of students are secure. The school works particularly well with parents and other agencies to ensure that no-one 'slips through the net'. Students are well informed about future options and career pathways as they move up the school. Links with primary schools and post-16 providers are outstanding. Students have frequent opportunities to reflect on their progress and are set ambitious targets for improvement. Their academic progress is closely tracked and through the Academic Olympics, high aspirational targets are set. Year 11 students benefit from a strong mentoring programme.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Strong and effective leadership is provided by the headteacher. There is a clear track record of overseeing improvements in standards, achievement and attendance, though standards in mathematics are still too low. Leadership has successfully brought stability to staffing in mathematics and provision is improving. He is supported by a relatively new but effective senior leadership team. Systems of monitoring and evaluation are robust, particularly the development of teaching and learning which is imaginatively led and is proving successful in raising the

overall quality of lessons. Excellent systems for tracking students' progress and setting challenging targets have been developed. They are beginning to support students' learning, but have not had time to fully impact positively on students' achievement. Challenging targets in examination results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are now being met. Systems of self-evaluation are good and developing at all levels. The school's development as a specialist college has been led with vision, vigour and commitment. Partnerships with other institutions and providers are excellent, for example, through the School Sports Partnership and through links with other schools in sharing expertise in assessment for learning practice.

Parents have confidence in the school's leadership. Governors are willing to offer support and encouragement, although their links with curriculum areas are at an embryonic stage. The school has a good capacity to improve.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	1

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
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
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	3
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

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

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishop Barrington School: A Sports with Mathematics College, Durham, DL14 6LA.

Thank you for taking time to talk to us when we visited your school recently and for the valuable contribution that many of you made to this inspection.

We were very pleased with the improvements the school has made since the previous inspection. We think your school is getting better all the time. Becoming a Sports with Mathematics College has given you the opportunity to participate in many more sports at lunch time and after school.

You are achieving better results in your national tests and Year 11 examinations than ever before, except in mathematics where we think you can do much better.

We found your behaviour and attitudes to be good and were impressed with how emphatic you were that there is no bullying at Bishop Barrington. We think the school takes excellent care of you.

You enjoy your lessons where you are well taught and make good progress. If you are really behind in your reading you get good support and soon catch up. We think that everyone, but especially Year 7, should get more encouragement and support to improve their reading skills.

Going for gold in the Academic Olympics has made you aware of how much you can achieve if you try and is an excellent way of setting yourselves personal but achievable targets in your academic work.

We think Bishop Barrington is a good school which you can be proud of.

Thank you once again for all your help. Good luck for the future!

Joe Clark, Lead inspector

Richard Marsden

Julie McGrane

Ken Self