

Old Buckenham High School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 121169 |
| Local Authority | Norfolk |
| Inspection number | 313905 |
| Inspection dates | 14–15 May 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | John Mitcheson 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 | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 592 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Chris Talbot |
| Headteacher | Mr Graham Hodson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7 February 2005 |
| School address | Abbey Road Old Buckenham Attleborough Norfolk NR17 1RL |
| Telephone number | 01953 860233 |
| Fax number | 01953 860944 |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Old Buckenham High School is a smaller than average 11-16 comprehensive school serving a rural area of Norfolk where the level of deprivation is lower than that found nationally. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The majority of students are White British; very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or have English as a second language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is increasing and is above average. Attainment on entry is above average. The school is over-subscribed. It holds the Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards.

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: 3

Old Buckenham High School provides a satisfactory education. It has some notable strengths, namely the above average standards achieved in Key Stage 3 and the higher than average number of students that attain five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics. It has experienced some turbulence due to staffing changes and the appointment of a number of new leaders and managers. Recent improvements to promote students' progress have been made but the school acknowledges that other aspects, whilst satisfactory, could improve further.

In Key Stage 3, students make satisfactory progress. Results of national tests at the end of Year 9 have remained above average for the past five years. In Key Stage 4, GCSE results have remained above the national average for the past three years. However, students' progress slows in Years 10 and 11 because teachers and managers have not monitored what each individual student is achieving and have not responded in time to prevent some under-achievement. The school has taken positive action to improve this and new procedures that are much more rigorous are now in place to track how well students are doing. Students who find learning difficult achieve satisfactorily.

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, is satisfactory. Attendance is similar to the national average. Behaviour is satisfactory but not all students display positive attitudes and some say that they do not always enjoy school. Most students are self-disciplined and courteous as they move around the school but in some lessons the behaviour of a small minority can hinder the learning of others. They know about healthy lifestyles and actively participate in physical education (PE) and sport, but do not always opt for healthy food at lunchtimes. They make a satisfactory contribution to the school and the local community but feel that their views are not always sought or acted upon.

A satisfactory curriculum meets the needs of the majority of students. In Key Stage 3, they experience a broad range of subjects including drama, languages, music and citizenship. In Key Stage 4, a wide range of GCSE courses meets the needs of most students but vocational learning is under-developed. The needs of the most able students are met well through additional GCSEs and A Level General Studies. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Observations by inspectors confirmed the school's own view that most lessons are satisfactory or good, but they noted that lessons can vary from outstanding to inadequate. An increasing number of teachers use assessment data effectively. They plan lessons that encourage students to work hard and think for themselves. A minority of teachers find it difficult to manage low-level disruptive behaviour or to plan different tasks to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers make satisfactory use of information and communication technology (ICT) but students do not have access to computers in all lessons. Lesson monitoring, mostly carried out by senior managers, is too infrequent and does not involve subject leaders. This lack of monitoring contributes to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. All requirements for child protection are in place. An established house system allows Heads of House to know individual students' needs and regularly monitor their effort and attitudes. Guidance about course options, work placements and future careers is effective. The majority of students go on to further education at the end of Year 11. Students are set challenging targets and say that they now feel better informed about their progress. Guidance on how to achieve their targets lacks consistency. A team of teachers and classroom assistants are becoming increasingly effective in meeting the needs of

students who find learning difficult. Many parental questionnaires commented that insufficient homework is given and that they wanted more communication with the school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior managers have been slow to react to some of the recommendations made in the previous inspection report. However, a strengthened senior leadership team now has a better understanding of the key issues facing the school. Leaders have begun to raise the expectations of all staff and make all middle leaders fully accountable for the standards achieved in their subjects. Senior leaders recognise the scope for further improvements in English, mathematics, science and ICT in Key Stage 4. Capacity to improve is satisfactory. A new governing body is fully committed to making further improvements and supporting senior leaders to raise achievement. Governors have taken more responsibility for the strategic direction of the school, including applying for specialist status this year. Value for money is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by ensuring that procedures to monitor students' progress become firmly embedded across the school.
- Improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching and learning by encouraging the most effective teachers to model good practice.
- Engage all leaders and managers in a formal programme of regular lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work.
- Seek and respond to the views of students and parents.

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

In Key Stage 3, the school missed its targets in English, mathematics and science but standards remained above average. The proportion of students attaining higher level grades was above average in mathematics and science but not in English. The school did not maintain a record of attainment in ICT last year but current assessment data shows that the majority of Year 9 students are meeting national expectations. In Key Stage 4, 61% of Year 11 students attained at least five A* to C grades and 58% of them attained five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics which is significantly higher than the national average. Results vary significantly across subjects, mainly due to staffing issues, inconsistencies in monitoring students' progress and some inadequate teaching. Since 2007, a small proportion of the most able students in Year 11 have attained A to E grades in A level General Studies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. Links with a school in Gambia have been recently established but there are few opportunities to appreciate wider multicultural issues. An active student council fundraises for school and community projects but students feel that they are not always listened to. Students show a good understanding of safe practices and healthy lifestyles. They enjoy PE lessons and extra curricular sport at lunchtimes and after school. Older students take responsibility as prefects, sports coaches,

mentors and library assistants, activities which support the development of personal qualities and skills to help them in their future working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most teachers use their expert subject knowledge to prepare interesting activities that meet the needs of all learners. Relationships are generally good and most students, particularly those in Years 10 and 11, appreciate the personal support they receive from teachers. A small proportion of lessons are inadequate, mainly due to teachers' weak management of behaviour. Managers do not encourage sufficiently the most effective way to disseminate good practice. Teaching assistants provide satisfactory support but increasing demands on their time means that they are not always available to assist students with learning difficulties and disabilities in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Sufficient curriculum time is allocated to core subjects in both key stages, but difficulties in recruiting staff has led to a reduction in time devoted to ICT, music and drama in Key Stage 3. The school has made suitable appointments and plans to increase curriculum time allocated to these subjects this year. Citizenship is taught in both key stages and all students receive two hours of PE per week. In Key Stage 4, the school makes alternative arrangements with a local college and local employers so that a small number of students not suited to GCSE studies can gain work-based qualifications. The most able students can opt to study three modern foreign languages, statistics and A level General Studies. The school offers a broad range of enrichment activities, especially in sport, in which a high proportion of students participate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a safe, caring environment in which to learn. Students know who to turn to if they have concerns. The school has introduced a detailed monitoring system to track how well students are progressing but this is very new and not yet firmly embedded. Current assessment data suggests that most students are on track to meet the targets set for them. Teachers set students challenging targets and inform them about their progress but the quality of guidance and feedback provided through teachers' marking is variable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

New appointments to the senior leadership team and middle managers have increased the capacity to make further improvements. Managers are now able to monitor the performance of individual students and accurately evaluate how well students are doing in different subjects. Most middle managers, including subject leaders and Heads of House, understand the role they play in leading and managing improvement within their areas of responsibility. A few subject leaders do not ensure that all students achieve their very best. Monitoring of teaching and

learning, mostly by senior managers, is under-developed. There is no clear, coherent programme of lesson observations and scrutiny of work involving middle managers. The school's self-evaluation and development planning is satisfactory but some priorities do not have clear criteria to gauge the impact of action taken to raise standards and achievement.

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

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| 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

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| 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? | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

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

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 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 |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Old Buckenham High School, Abbey Road, Attleborough, Norfolk, NR17 1RL

Earlier this week I visited your school and found it to be satisfactory. Your input was vital in helping me to make this judgement, so thank you for assisting me and my team of inspectors when we joined you in lessons, talked with you and looked at some of your work. I also spent time with some of your teachers, met with school governors and read many letters from parents.

I was particularly impressed with the standards achieved in Key Stage 3 and the number of students that attain five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. It was also good to see from the displays around the school the large numbers of you who participate in enrichment activities and educational visits. You share very positive relations with staff and know who you can talk to if you have concerns. You told us that school is a safe and enjoyable place to be.

Most students make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 but this slows in Key Stage 4. I found that some of you do not always achieve what you are capable of in some subjects. Members of the school council expressed concerns that your views were not listened to by senior managers. Therefore, I have asked your teachers to make four further improvements:

- Ensure that procedures to monitor your progress become firmly embedded across the school.
- Improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching and learning by encouraging the most effective teachers to model good practice.
- Engage all leaders and managers in a formal programme of regular lesson observations and scrutiny of your work.
- Seek and respond to your views and those of your parents.

The headteacher and his team of staff lead and manage your school satisfactorily. You can help them by asking your school council to share your views about what improvements could be made to the school with senior teachers. Once again, thank you for your help and I wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector