

Bedale High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121670
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	314078
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Maddison HMI

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	854
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Barningham
Headteacher	Mr Graham Turner
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Fitzalan Road Bedale North Yorkshire DL8 2EQ
Telephone number	01677 422419
Fax number	01677 425488

Age group	11-16
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2007
Inspection number	314078

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average 11 to 16 community school serving the town of Bedale and some of the surrounding villages. This is predominantly a rural area and many students are bussed to the school each day. Pupil mobility is higher than average and this is principally due to the arrival and departure of children whose families are based with either the army at Catterick or the air force at Leeming. One in eight children come from service families. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is well below average. Whereas the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, the proportion with statements of special educational needs is below average. Nearly all students are of White British heritage. There are very few looked-after children. In September 2007, the school gained specialist status as a humanities college.

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 and students make good progress. The personal development and pastoral care of the students are particular strengths. This is a result of the positive ethos which is fostered throughout the school. It is, in the words of its prospectus, a 'nurturing, caring and supportive school'.

Achievement is good. Students enter the school with average levels of attainment but they make good progress and, by the time they leave at the end of Year 11, their standards are above national averages. There is, though, scope for even higher achievement, especially at Key Stage 3, and for more students, particularly boys, to attain higher standards. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and they also make good progress. Students do well overall because they are well motivated and because they receive good teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan well. This good practice strengthens learning. Lessons are often good, sometimes outstanding, especially when teachers enable students to take an active part in the lessons. However, teaching is not consistently good, or better, across all subjects. Excellent practice in teaching and learning is beginning to be shared but this is yet to impact fully across the whole school. The curriculum is good overall and, at Key Stage 4, it provides a range of academic and vocational opportunities which effectively meet the needs of all students. Specialist status has only just been gained, but it is already starting to have a positive impact on attitudes and expectations. The school is successfully establishing a platform for academic achievement and excellence: it has high ambitions and it has set challenging targets for 2008.

Pastoral care is a particular strength and is valued greatly by the students as well as their parents, who are very appreciative of the support provided by the school. Students are polite, confident and responsible young people. They behave well and take a pride in their school. They enjoy coming to school, as is shown by their good attendance, their positive response to the high expectations the school has of them and their good relationships with each other and with staff. This is a calm and well-ordered community in which young people are being well prepared for life beyond school. An important factor in the school's success is the effective leadership of the headteacher. He is determined to raise achievement and standards. He is very well supported by an able leadership team and by an increasingly effective group of middle leaders. However, lack of consistency in practice across middle leadership and management has slowed the pace of change but this is being addressed as part of the current whole-school improvement agenda. Staff and governors have responded well to the lead taken by the headteacher and their support and dedication contribute to the school's success. The school's self-evaluation is well focused: strengths and weaknesses are accurately identified. The headteacher and senior leaders have developed a good school improvement plan which identifies key areas for development and appropriate strategies for delivery. The roles of an expanded senior leadership team are well matched to achieving the school's strategic aims. As a result, the capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards, especially at Key Stage 3, and particularly for boys.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to that of the very best.
- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels by creating greater consistency of practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The achievement of students is good and it is improving. The results at Key Stage 3 in 2007, however, were disappointing but the school has reacted to deal with this and appropriate initiatives are in place to improve standards. At Key Stage 4, students perform well and standards are consistently above national averages. In 2007, two-thirds of students attained five subjects at GCSE at Grade C or above. This was an improvement on the previous year, as was the proportion of students gaining five good grades including English and mathematics. Overall, the good results attained by students in this school are because they are well taught. It is also because the vast majority have positive attitudes to their studies, are willing to be engaged, work hard and strive to do well. Due to well-matched support from teachers and teaching assistants, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. Through its own self-evaluation, the school has identified the performance of boys as a particular concern. To ensure these students make good progress, a number of measures have been put in place to raise the standards of boys' achievement. The initial impact of these strategies is positive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Their progress in understanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is also good. This is the result of the well planned activities for personal, social and health education, and citizenship. It is also due to assemblies which promote the school's positive ethos. Students enjoy school and are keen to learn. This is shown in their positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons and around the school. It is also reflected in their friendly working relationships with staff and with each other, and by their good attendance which is above the national average. Students feel safe, know who to turn to for help and are pleased that problems are quickly resolved. This helps to reinforce their positive attitudes. Students willingly contribute to the school community and take responsibility as assistant receptionists, prefects and as peer mentors through the 'PALS' programme. The school council, Eco-council and healthy school teams work effectively to improve the quality of school life. Students also make a good contribution to the wider community: they work to raise funds for charity and give their time to support students who attend a neighbouring special school. They enjoy these opportunities which develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. Students are developing a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They benefit from regular exercise through the good allocation of time for physical education and they appreciate the improvements in the quality of food available in school. Good links with local employers, personalised work-experience programmes, and an increasing range of vocational courses, help to develop valuable skills and knowledge which will support students in their future economic well-being. This work is at any early stage but initial signs are encouraging and show that students are being well prepared for life after school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and this enables students to achieve well. In the most effective lessons, when teaching is often outstanding, students enjoy their work because the lessons are well organised, involve challenging and varied activities and proceed at a good pace. Lesson objectives are shared with students and opportunities are taken towards the end of lessons to consolidate learning. As a result, students become more motivated and more involved in their work. They also leave these classrooms more secure in their learning. Well-focused professional development for teachers has contributed to the progress being made in strengthening the quality of teaching and learning, as has the start that has been made in sharing good practice. As a result, teachers are confident, they have a good understanding of how to teach their subjects, give clear explanations and plan well staged steps in learning that help students to make good progress. Much of the teaching observed was judged to be good, sometimes outstanding. However, it is not yet consistently good, or better. Opportunities are not always taken to review and reinforce what students have learned in lessons, work set is not always well matched to meet the needs of all the students and sufficient time is not always given in which to allow students to discuss and reflect upon what they are being taught.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is well planned and it effectively meets the needs of the students, whilst reflecting the school's context and its specialist status. It is also contributing to raising students' aspirations. The 'Learning to Learn' course in Year 7 focuses upon the teaching of learning skills and this aspect of the curriculum is beginning to have a positive impact on raising achievement. In Years 10 and 11, the students benefit from a range of academic and vocational options. Students appreciate these opportunities, an increasing number of which are provided in partnership with local colleges and other work-based learning providers. The curriculum is being successfully adapted and extended to meet individual needs: higher attaining students, for example, are particularly appreciative of the opportunity to follow AS level courses whilst studying GCSEs. A varied programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities contributes valuably to students' achievement, enjoyment and personal development. These include creative, leisure and sporting opportunities, as well as residential visits and international exchanges, revision and booster classes. The well-planned work experience equips students effectively for their future, as does the personal, social and health education course, work-related learning and the careers education and guidance programme. Together these activities enable students to make well-informed decisions about their next steps after leaving school. Although careers education and guidance is good at Key Stage 4, it is only satisfactory at Key Stage 3.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support provided by the school are good and contribute significantly to the personal development of the students. Pastoral support is well developed and the school rightly prides itself on the level of care and welfare it provides. Students are well known to staff and say they feel valued as individuals, listened to and looked after. Arrangements for safeguarding, including those for child protection, are firmly in place. Strong partnerships with

outside agencies help to provide sensitive and effective care and support for vulnerable students, including looked-after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A key feature of the school's commitment to the care and guidance of the students is the 'learning support base', which successfully underpins the personal development and achievement of the students for whom it caters. Recently the arrangements for checking on students' progress towards their targets have been strengthened. However, these systems are not yet consistently embedded across the whole school. Extensive links with primary schools effectively smooth the transfer of students into Year 7. The guidance programme ensures students receive good support and information when making their subject choices at the end of Year 9 and when considering their subsequent career and post-16 educational opportunities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and have been effective, particularly at Key Stage 4, in raising standards and ensuring that students make good progress in their personal development and their learning. The effective headteacher is well supported by an enthusiastic and able senior leadership team and dedicated staff. He has successfully steered the school through a period of change so that leaders at all levels now share a common vision. This is reflected in increasingly high expectations which help to foster the positive learning atmosphere throughout the school. Day-to-day management is good and the school runs smoothly. Sound financial management ensures that staff and resources are well deployed and that the school gives good value for money. Leaders and managers recognise that they will be held to account for their performance. However, they are not as effective as they could be because there is too much variety of practice across the school. Senior leaders are aware that this has slowed the pace of change and are introducing more systematic and consistent procedures as part of the whole-school improvement agenda. Governance is good: governors are well informed and dedicated to their work. They have a good grasp of the crucial issues facing the school and they provide effective challenge to senior leaders. They meet regularly and are committed to providing high quality education and care for all students. The school has good links with the community. Parents are very pleased with the school and particularly praise the care and the support which is provided for their children.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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
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?	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
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	2
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

Inspection of Bedale High School, Bedale, DL8 2EQ.

On behalf of the inspection team, I would very much like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. We greatly appreciated the time you spent talking to us and we found your comments very helpful. As well as coming into lessons and looking at your work, we read the questionnaires completed by your parents. Like you, they were very supportive of the school.

This is a good school and it has many strengths; for example:

- you have good attitudes to learning and you achieve good results in national tests and examinations
- you enjoy coming to school, behave well in lessons and around the school and have good relationships with each other as well as with staff
- you are well taught, your teachers work hard on your behalf and you respond positively
- your school is well run and well led
- you receive good care and support.

You are making good progress but you could do even better! We have asked the headteacher, the staff and the governors to help all of you, but especially boys, to achieve even higher standards, particularly at Key Stage 3. We have also asked Mr Turner to make sure that:

- all lessons are as good as the very best we saw when we were in school
- leaders and managers are more consistent in the way they work.

We very much enjoyed visiting your school and I would like to thank you once again for being so friendly and polite.

I wish you all every success in the future.