

Bristol Gateway School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132239
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	315984
Inspection date	17 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Wike
Headteacher	Mike Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2005
School address	Long Cross Lawrence Weston Bristol BS11 0QA
Telephone number	01173 772275
Fax number	0117 3772283

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • the procedures for evaluating pupils' progress and achievements and the use of assessment data in setting challenging targets; • the effectiveness of systems for assessing, tracking and improving pupils' personal development and behaviour; • the structure and management of the curriculum; • the effectiveness of the school in meeting the needs of the very few girls on roll. Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, school documentation and assessment information. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection 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

The school has undergone significant and wide-ranging changes since the previous inspection. In September 2006, it relocated to refurbished accommodation six miles away from the site it occupied at the last inspection and extended its age range to include Key Stage 4 pupils. It admitted girls for the first time in April 2007, although there are very few on roll. All of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social learning difficulties and many have additional learning difficulties, such as autism. The school admits pupils from across the city and some from an adjoining local authority. Generally, pupils live in low socio-economic circumstances. Almost two thirds of them are entitled to free school meals and approximately 10% are in the care of the local authority. Most pupils have a White British heritage.

The school recently acquired a Sportsmark Award and Healthy School status.

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. It has managed to remain effective since the previous inspection despite a very turbulent two years. Preparing for the changes consumed a great deal of senior leaders' time, and the extent of the changes had a significant impact on staff and pupils. Staff were required to plan a Key Stage 4 curriculum and to manage older pupils for the first time. Pupils had much further to travel to school and, in many cases, independently on public transport when previously they had been taken by taxi. Finally, some pupils felt the need to assert themselves in an area of the city that was new to them, and there were instances of pupils causing disturbance in the local community, such as confrontations with pupils from neighbourhood schools.

The school struggled to deal with the deterioration in pupils' attitudes and behaviour caused by the upheaval. There was a sharp decline in attendance and a steep increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions. The school has achieved its targets in reversing both of these trends during the current school year. Attendance has improved by 7% and the number of fixed term exclusions is only a third of that of the previous year. In addition, pupils' behaviour around the school is showing a steady improvement and there are fewer instances of both low-level disturbance and more serious incidents. The improvements were achieved because leaders recognised the priorities that they needed to address and then effectively targeted resources to address the problems. These included the appointment of senior staff with specific responsibility for coordinating pupils' pastoral support and guidance; a growth in the number of link workers and learning mentors who work directly with pupils and their families and carers; and a new system for monitoring and recording pupils' behaviour and attitudes throughout the day. These developments are beginning to take effect but they have not been in place long enough to have impacted fully.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall. They have a good understanding of a safe and healthy lifestyle, and during discussion they said that they enjoyed school. However, a few pupils' attendance, behaviour, moral development and awareness of others' needs show that not all pupils share this view. A small group of pupils accounts for much of the non-attendance and although the school works very closely with the education welfare service, it is having little success in dealing with this. The personal development tracking system enables staff to provide individual pupils with support and guidance, but leaders do not analyse this data as well as they could at a whole-school level. They cannot pinpoint, for example, particular times of the day, subjects or locations when different types of incident are most likely to occur and so they are unable to take actions that will have the most effect on reducing their frequency.

Despite the difficulties of the transition, staff have been able to maintain a good quality of education. Consequently, overall pupils make good progress even though standards are, inevitably, significantly below national expectations because of the disruptions in pupils' education. Pupils achieve well because they learn at a good rate and they follow a good curriculum. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan lessons in a consistent way, with a good focus on what they expect their pupils to learn. A variety of activities retains pupils' interest, and teachers' and pupils' improved use of information and communication technology provides additional motivation. Questions are used well to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills and to assess their understanding. This ongoing assessment provides staff with good information about pupils' learning and they use this when planning future lessons.

Pupils' achievements are assessed formally on a regular basis. Leaders record, monitor and analyse these assessments, and this shows that no group of pupils, such as girls or those in public care, achieves less well than other pupils. They also analyse individual pupils' achievements and use their findings well to trigger specific interventions, such as additional literacy support. Assessment data is used to set challenging targets for pupils, based on National Curriculum (NC) sub-levels, but the system is not refined enough. It does not take enough account of individual pupils' abilities, assuming that all pupils can make a similar amount of progress. This restricts leaders' ability to judge whole-school progress and achievement based on an established set of principles, such as the proportion of pupils who achieve or exceed their targets. There is some sharing of NC targets with pupils, but this is not reinforced over time. Staff do not consistently draw pupils' attention to the criteria and descriptors of each NC level to show them what they need to do to move to the next level. This reduces the extent to which pupils can be involved in evaluating their own learning through self-assessment.

Other features of care, guidance and support are much better. Excellent links with other agencies, such as children's mental health services and the youth offending team, provide a coordinated approach to supporting pupils and their families. Child protection and physical handling procedures are securely in place, and the school has taken appropriate measures to safeguard pupils. Pupils are prepared well for leaving school. They follow accredited examination courses, the range of which is increasing as more pupils move into Key Stage 4, and the most capable pupils supplement this by following additional GCSE courses in mainstream schools. Such very strong links with partners also make a powerful contribution to pupils' very good work-related learning curriculum. All pupils have the opportunity to pursue a vocational course at local colleges and to go on work experience. The school's success in this area is evident in the fact that three pupils successfully obtained places on a Young Apprenticeship Scheme in open competition with their peers in mainstream schools. Transport problems prevent regular after-school clubs, but the school's commitment to its pupils is evidenced by its willingness to provide a breakfast club and an extended school day for individual pupils who require support with their work or an opportunity to pursue a particular interest. The school enjoys the overwhelming support of its parents, who make comments such as: 'If I have a problem with my son, I know that I can always talk to the school. I have found them really approachable.'

School leaders did a good job in managing the challenges that the school faced after the previous inspection. They have set a clear direction for the school, and an effective governing body fulfils well its role as a 'critical friend' and provides good support. Governors and an effective leadership team have a good capacity to address the school's development areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set long-term National Curriculum level targets that are specific to individual pupils by linking them more closely to pupils' prior learning and levels of attainment, and develop a clear rationale in order to evaluate pupils' achievements.
- Make more effective use of whole-school data to improve pupils' personal development.
- Develop the sharing of National Curriculum level targets with pupils and make more frequent use of the level descriptors to motivate pupils and show them what they need to do to make progress, thereby encouraging self-evaluation of their work.

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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
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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	4
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?	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	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?	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

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	3
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

18 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bristol Gateway School, Bristol BS11 0QA

I really enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for making me feel so welcome, with a special thanks to those of you who gave up your time to meet with me.

Yours is a good school. Lessons are good and you make good progress. The school gives you a good variety of learning activities, with an especially strong focus on work experience and college courses. This prepares you well for leaving school, but if you are to make the most of this, all of you need to attend school regularly and follow the school rules more closely. You know a lot about staying fit and healthy. The school provides a satisfactory level of care, guidance and support.

The people who run the school do a good job and they have lots of ideas about how they can make things better. I have given them three extra things to focus on:

- to check in detail that every one of you is doing as well as you possibly can;
- to make better use of the information that staff collect throughout the day to improve the behaviour and attitudes of some of you;
- to make sure that you know all of your learning targets and show you in more detail exactly what you need to do to improve, including how to assess your own work.

Some of you found it very difficult to deal with the move to the new school. Too many of you did not go to school often enough and a number of you did not behave as well as you should have done. The situation is now better but if the school is to continue to improve, all of you need to go to school regularly and behave well while you are there.

Thank you once again. I wish all of you the very best of luck in the future, especially if you are leaving school this year.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kell Lead Inspector