

Bishopshalt School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102440
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	323643
Inspection date	28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Alder HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1257
Sixth form	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andy Brown
Headteacher	Mr David Bocock
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2006
School address	Royal Lane Hillingdon Uxbridge UB8 3RF
Telephone number	01895 233909
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, as well as students' personal development and well-being, their achievement and standards of work, and the quality of teaching and of care, guidance and support. In addition, the curriculum and the quality of leadership and management were evaluated. Evidence came from observations of the school at work, the school's data and interviews with members of the school staff and with students.

Description of the school

The school is popular, being oversubscribed. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is similar to that found nationally. The proportion who are from minority ethnic groups is greater than the national average, as is the proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs. The school has specialist status in Music and the Performing Arts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Some aspects of its work are good. The school is popular with parents. Of those who returned the inspection questionnaire, the great majority were positive about the school. Students' behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school site. The school provides a safe environment.

When students join the school in Year 7, the standards they have reached in their work are broadly average. They make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9, so that by the end of Year 9 the standards they achieve in the national tests are broadly average. Again, in Years 10 and 11, students are making satisfactory progress and the standards reached in GCSE examinations are broadly average overall, as well as in English and mathematics. All groups of students make at least satisfactory progress, but those who receive extra support because they have learning difficulties, including those with statements of educational needs, make good progress. Currently, progress being made by students remains satisfactory. The targets for students' attainment in the school's specialist subjects have been achieved. The school's leaders are aware of the satisfactory progress being made and have taken some recent steps to bring about improvement. These include improvements in Years 10 and 11 and to the school's use of assessment to secure learning. It is too early to judge the impact of these initiatives. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

The reason for students' progress being satisfactory rather than good is because, in general, self-evaluation by senior leaders and department heads is not rigorous or accurate enough and areas needing improvement are not securely identified. In addition, the use of assessment data to identify and rectify students' underachievement and to inform them of what they need to know, or be able to do, to achieve their targets is underdeveloped. In some cases, some aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study are not receiving the proper emphasis. In science for example, the teaching of the analytical and evaluative skills of scientific investigation is underdeveloped.

Nevertheless, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, and lessons are well planned, containing a range of activities to engage and interest students. New concepts are explained clearly, so that students know what is expected of them and, as a result, they tackle their work with confidence. Relationships between students and their teachers are good. Students are given good opportunities to work independently and in groups, which they do well. The pace of lessons is generally brisk and students are well involved through being frequently asked questions. However, questions are not used sufficiently as a means of assessing their understanding, or to identify misconceptions so that teaching can be adjusted if necessary. In a minority of lessons, students are not given a clear indication of what it is they should be learning and such lessons lack a clear focus.

The care, guidance and support given to students is satisfactory and in some respects it is strong. The school is successful at helping students to settle quickly when they join the school in Year 7. Some very good support is provided for students who may be having personal difficulties and professional counsellors from outside the school are used where such expertise is helpful. The statutory safeguarding procedures are in place. The effectiveness of the work done to encourage good attendance is satisfactory, though there has been some increase in unauthorised absence. Good support is given to vulnerable students, which helps them to achieve well. However, academic guidance is not as strong. Students are not clear enough about

what they need to do to achieve their targets and not enough is done to help those who are falling behind to catch up. There is a particular focus in Year 11 on helping students to achieve a C grade at GCSE, but overall there is not sufficient sustained support over their years in school to help those who are capable of better, or to help those who cannot aspire to such grades.

The result of the work to ensure that students feel secure, and the good relationships that adults build with students, is that students behave well and enjoy life in the safe environment that the school provides. One parent wrote to inspectors to say that her child 'feels very happy and safe'. Students' personal development is good. They report that there is little bullying or racist behaviour. Students are polite and considerate, and many speak articulately, and with confidence, to adults. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is helped by the work of the school's specialist status, which successfully encourages collaborative group work, a sensitivity to the needs of others, and an appreciation of culture. Students' ability to work both independently and together, along with their positive attitudes to work and their average attainment, make a good contribution to their being well prepared for their future economic well-being. Students show a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives. This is encouraged because the curriculum includes the recommended amount of physical education, but also includes dance for all in Years 7 to 9. Students are well informed about the importance of healthy eating, a message that is supported by the healthiness of the food offered at break and lunchtimes. Those who take their own lunch often reveal that they still have a preference for less healthy options, however! Learners make a good contribution to the community.

The curriculum is good. It offers a wide variety of options. In Years 10 and 11 it includes both academic and vocational subjects. Challenge is provided by the inclusion of statistics as a GCSE subject. There is also the opportunity for work-based learning for those whose interests lie in a more practical direction. There is good extra-curricular provision, including a wide range of arts and sports clubs. The curriculum in Years 8 and 9 is adapted well for those with different abilities and interests, with an additional modern foreign language, further study of expressive arts, or additional work in literacy and numeracy for those who would benefit.

The school's leadership and management are satisfactory. The leaders and managers have put in place a good curriculum and good care arrangements, and ensured that there is equality of opportunity, with students from different backgrounds and ethnic groups forming good relationships with each other. There is, though, too much variation in the quality of the evaluation of the school's work. For example, some of the evaluations done by subject leaders are accurate and detailed, but too many others are superficial, being neither searching nor sufficiently self-critical. The school's leaders have recognised that some of the evaluations of teaching quality are too positive, and have begun to rectify this with the help of training from the local authority. There is not enough evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's work to help students' personal development, for example their commitment to healthy eating and to physical exercise and their avoidance of unsafe practices outside school. The effect of all this is that the plans for improvement are not based on sufficient accurate analysis. Some departments' plans for improvement do not enable there to be regular checks on progress, because there is an absence of quantitative targets. Governors, who are in the process of establishing closer links with departments, are therefore, like senior leaders, not able to judge accurately from time to time whether progress is sufficient.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Its students participate well in the local community, but there is no strong strategy for engaging with it based on an analysis of its characteristics. Nevertheless, it is evident that diversity is valued and the school is

concerned to ensure that barriers to participation are overcome, for example by employing counsellors for specific groups of students. In addition, students gain a satisfactory understanding of the ways of life of different groups in Britain.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students make good progress in the sixth form and reach standards in their work which are above average. The sixth form provides a good education for its students, who are pleased by the very large number of subjects offered, which include a wide range of both academic and vocational options. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Students' personal development is outstanding. They develop an impressive assuredness during their time in the sixth form and contribute well to the life of the school. They are given good academic support and guidance. They feel that their progress is monitored closely and value the help that they are given in their applications to higher education. One student said that the teachers are 'always pushing you to achieve your potential'. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good, as is the quality of the teaching that sixth-formers receive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the progress that students make in their work, by ensuring that those who are underachieving are helped to catch up and by ensuring that students know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Ensure that the work of the school is evaluated with greater rigour and accuracy, so that areas for improvement can be identified.
- Ensure that improvement plans contain quantitative targets which allow progress to be evaluated at intervals throughout the school year, so that any slippage can be identified and rectified.

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.

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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
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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?	3	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	3	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which 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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

11 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishopshalt School, Uxbridge, UB8 3RF

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school recently. We managed to speak to quite a number of you. We were impressed by your politeness, by how articulate many of you are, and also by the confidence that you show when speaking to adults. You told us that you enjoy school and feel safe. Your relationships with the teachers and other adults in the school are good, as are the relationships between students. We were pleased to hear that there is little racism or bullying.

You are taught well and the school works hard, and successfully to make sure that you are safe and well cared for. There is a good range of subjects for you to choose from, both in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form, the curriculum is outstanding. There is also some variation in the curriculum for Years 8 and 9, so that it can cater better for your differing interests and abilities.

The progress you make in your work is satisfactory, and good in the sixth form. We have made some suggestions to your school so that it can help you make at least good progress throughout the school. Our recommendations are that you are given more help if you are not making the progress you should be and that you are informed about what you should do if you need to improve your work. We also think that your school's leaders should thoroughly check how successful the school and the subject departments are in their work, so that any areas which need to improve can be identified. Finally, we are also asking school leaders to monitor more accurately how well the school is improving, so they can make sure that improvements are happening quickly and successfully.

We noticed that overall your attendance is satisfactory. You can help your learning to be good by trying to attend more.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours faithfully

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector