

Belle Vue Girls School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107368
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	324566
Inspection date	31 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School (total)	1126
Sixth form	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Lynette Kirk
Headteacher	Ms Margaret Platts MBE
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2005
School address	Thorn Lane Bingley Road Bradford West Yorkshire BD9 6NA
Telephone number	01274 492341
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the sixth form and investigated achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and learning, and the quality of leadership and management. Evidence was collected from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; observing the school at work; discussions with students, senior staff and the chair of governors; and scrutiny of documentation and the questionnaires completed by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

This is a larger than average-sized girls school. Its students come from urban areas of well above average social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is very high. Nearly all students are from Asian families, chiefly Pakistani. About 80% of students speak English as an additional language. Well above average numbers of students leave or join the school during the school year. These include a significant number of students from European countries, mainly Slovakia, who speak little or no English on arrival. About 40% of the school population has learning difficulties and/or disabilities; this is well above the national average. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need, however, is slightly below average. The school was designated as a specialist language college in 2003 and gained a second specialism in science and mathematics in 2008. The school has Investor in People status, is an accredited International School and also has Healthy Schools status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Students are proud of their school and unanimously describe it as 'brilliant' when asked their opinion. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and value the education it provides for their daughters. 'I am very happy with all the opportunities it provides,' and, 'My daughters have grown in confidence since joining the school because everyone believes in them and has high expectations for them,' are typical comments. The school's specialist status in modern foreign languages has been used expertly to raise standards across the school and, equally importantly, to broaden students' horizons. Educational trips abroad, including trips to China, are frequent. There are extensive links with other schools both locally and abroad. Students say how much they value these opportunities. 'It helps us realise there's a world beyond Bradford. This helps us become more open-minded and understanding of differences,' was a telling comment.

Students' enjoyment is seen in their happy, smiling faces. The vast majority of students attend regularly. However, the observance of religious festivals, extended family trips abroad and the unavoidable absence of several students who have quite severe medical conditions limit the overall attendance figures for the school to broadly average. Procedures and policies for safeguarding students meet current government requirements. Students feel exceptionally safe in school and value the high quality of care and guidance they receive. 'Teachers are always there for us. They respect us, so we respect them,' they say with feeling. As a result, behaviour is exemplary. Students are inquisitive and polite. They are self-confident and warmly welcoming to visitors. They know the value of healthy lifestyles. The well-being mentor does sterling work in encouraging the girls to be physically active. Participation rates in sporting enrichment activities are high. The school's impact on community cohesion is good and developing rapidly. For example, the school works hard to provide opportunities for students to take on responsibilities in the school community; students are active in supporting local and international charities; and the school is working hard and successfully to forge international links and understanding. Students have high career aspirations. The proportion of students who leave the main school or the sixth form without employment or embarking on further education or training is exceptionally low.

Students join the school with well below average levels of attainment and in some year groups it is exceptionally low. Data shows that on entry to the school over 75% of students have reading ages below or well below those normally expected for their age. Despite this, excellent support and high expectations, which are the keynotes of the school, enable students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve outstandingly well. Standards by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 have been on an upward trend in recent years and are now average. Inspection evidence shows that standards are continuing to rise. The current Year 11 students, who had exceptionally low attainment levels on entry to the school, are set to exceed the demanding GCSE targets set for them and attain levels in English and mathematics in line with the 2008 national averages. Rigorous and meticulous monitoring of students' progress means that students' needs are identified at a very early stage so that barriers to learning can be tackled and any underachievement can be nipped in the bud. Students know their targets for success and are determined to achieve them. 'Our teachers are always willing us on. They help us understand what we need to do reach our targets. I'm confident I can do as well as the school thinks I can,' are typical comments from older students.

Many factors contribute to this will to succeed, which permeates the school. Not the least of these is the inspired leadership of the headteacher, who is very ably supported by other leaders and managers at all levels, including governors. The vision for the school is crystal clear. At its heart is making sure that every student is valued and treated equally. There is strong teamwork in pursuit of this on the part of leaders and managers at all levels. Rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is used very effectively to target improvement. As a result, teaching is never less than good and much is outstanding. Teaching has a sharp focus on effective learning. It is typified by high levels of challenge and expectation. Classroom relationships are universally very strong. Students approach lessons with a real will to learn. They give their undivided attention and work hard. Teachers' high expectations mean that their use of language occasionally does not match students' level of understanding. This is especially the case with younger students and for those whose mastery of English is still developing. Some lack of understanding is the natural result. The school has worked hard and successfully to develop its curriculum. It is now outstandingly successful in offering a wide range of courses and qualifications to match students' needs and aspirations.

The school has made outstanding progress since the previous inspection. It gives outstanding value for money. Its record of successfully raising standards through strong and purposeful leadership and management means it has outstanding capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding sixth form for many similar reasons that the main school is outstanding. The school encourages students to continue studying in the sixth form, accepting many who would normally not embark on further study. As a result, the overall attainment on entry to Year 12 is below average. Standards have been rising steeply and are now broadly average. The sixth form builds on the solid foundations for learning that are laid down in the main school. Numbers entering the sixth form are growing rapidly. Accordingly, highly effective leadership and management of the sixth form have extended the range of courses and qualifications to match students' needs and aspirations closely. Very few students leave the sixth form without completing a course or gaining qualifications. Increasing numbers are going on to higher education, including degree courses at prestigious universities. This is the best evidence of a successful sixth form, which is raising students' aspirations, life chances and confidence to succeed. Students approach their studies with a maturity and desire to succeed that belie their years. They appreciate the high level of support, guidance and encouragement that is always at hand.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that teachers use language appropriate to students' levels of understanding, especially for younger students and for those whose skills in English are less well developed.

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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?	1	1
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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**

Thank you for your warm welcome during the recent visit to inspect your school. It was a pleasure to meet you and talk to many of you. What you said was very helpful in enabling the judgements about your school to be reached.

You will be delighted to know that you go to an outstandingly successful school. Your behaviour, positive attitudes and your hard work are all very impressive. You said how pleased you are with your school and how proud of it you are – and rightly so! The school provides you with a vast range of opportunities, trips abroad for example, to help you develop and grow in confidence. It is good to see so many of you grasping these chances enthusiastically. Your hard work and the good teaching you receive mean that you make excellent progress as you move up through the school – well done! Your desire to succeed is very pleasing to see. The school goes to great lengths to make sure you are well cared for and supported. It has high expectations for you and does all it can to help you succeed. It is very encouraging to see that more and more of you are choosing to continue studying in the sixth form and beyond. Your headteacher and all the other adults working with you are proud of you and have high expectations for what you can achieve. You respond with a commitment to learning and hard work, which is a credit to you.

To make your school even more successful, I am asking the school to do only one thing.

- Make sure that teachers use language in lessons which is not too difficult for the younger students or for those of you are still developing your skills in English to understand.

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your school and am confident that you will continue to play your part in its continuing success in the coming years.