

# Bridgewater High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111447
<b>Local Authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	325387
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Chambers HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1689
Sixth form	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr S Whatmore
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Tim Long
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 November 2005
<b>School address</b>	Broomfields Road Appleton Warrington Cheshire WA4 3AE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 263 919
<b>Fax number</b>	01925 861 434

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Bridgewater High School is a large school, most of whose students come from villages and suburbs located to the south of Warrington. The school serves a socially mixed, but relatively advantaged area and the proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals is low. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion with a statement of special educational need are both average. Over 95% of the students are of White British heritage. The school is designated as a High Performing Specialist School, with specialisms in performing and visual arts and science including mathematics. It holds the Sportsmark Award, Artsmark Gold Award, Investors in Careers and Investors in People. An acting headteacher has been in post since September 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Bridgewater High School is a good and improving school, where standards are high and students achieve well. One parent described the school as having gone 'from strength to strength' in recent years and inspectors agree. The rising trend of GCSE results in recent years is impressive. Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are above those expected for their age. They make rapid progress up to Year 11, and GCSE results are well above average. Students' achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 is outstanding. This achievement is the result of good and sometimes outstanding teaching, strong academic guidance and an outstanding curriculum that caters extremely well for students' needs. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory. The comprehensive and intensive system of support and guidance that helps students to achieve so well up to GCSE is now being used to support sixth form students. However, it is less well established than in Key Stages 3 and 4, and it is too early to see the full benefits in terms of improved outcomes.

The school is well led and managed overall. It is an inclusive community; school policies promote equal opportunities and combat discrimination effectively. The impact of specialist status is impressive, for example, in the development of students' social skills and cultural understanding. Extensive work with local primary schools includes a very effective 'transition project' where Arts work started in primary schools forms the focus of a cross-curricular project in the first weeks of Year 7. This work leads up to a performance for parents in which Year 7 students take part. Other notable features of the outstanding curriculum on offer include extensive opportunities in dance and drama, a broad range of science courses and 'accelerated learning' opportunities for the most able. Self-evaluation overall is outstanding; senior leaders and middle managers know the school extremely well and share a common vision for how the school can improve further. There has been good improvement overall since the last inspection. All the areas for improvement have been effectively addressed and the rising trend of results at GCSE has been maintained; the capacity for further improvement is good.

The quality of teaching is good. Many teachers employ lively activities that help the students to enjoy their learning, including good use of information and communication technology (ICT). In the small number of lessons where learning is slower, teachers' planning does not cater sufficiently for students of different abilities. Behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school and students demonstrate good personal development. Parents are highly supportive and the school enjoys a justifiably strong local reputation. For example, almost all the parents who returned the inspection questionnaire felt that their child enjoyed school and was making good progress in lessons. A typical comment was, 'we have been very happy with the progress our son has made " he seems happy and content to go to school'. Another parent stated 'the management and staff are dedicated and my son has been very happy in his first three years'. The students' enjoyment of school is evident in their outstanding attendance and their active participation in lessons.

### Effectiveness of the sixth form

#### Grade: 3

Standards in the sixth form are above average. Standards are lower than in the main school because of the open access entry policy and that some of the more able students from Year 11 choose to continue their studies elsewhere. Results in 2007 were generally above average. Given their ability on entry to the sixth form, this represents satisfactory achievement. The

courses on offer are well matched to students' needs. The school's specialist subjects enhance the curriculum, with high numbers choosing to study performing arts courses. The school is aware that further collaboration with other providers will help to broaden the curriculum and it has plans to achieve this. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and retention rates are excellent. They say that they respect their teachers and appreciate the support that is always available.

Teaching and learning is good and this is matched by good levels of personal development. Academic guidance is satisfactory; recently introduced measures for monitoring progress and providing targeted support are beginning to have an impact, but the effect is yet to be seen in improved examination results. There are a wide range of support and enrichment opportunities, which include preparation for university and activities that help to develop students' social skills. For example, a 'Ready Steady Cook' activity saw 35 students demonstrate their culinary skills whilst being observed by a large audience. Students make a good contribution to the school and community; for example, several are undertaking a coaching skills course that will enable them to help younger students at risk of underachieving. Improvement since the last inspection and the impact of leadership are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been broadened and measures to monitor progress have been tightened up. Self-evaluation is good and there is satisfactory capacity to improve further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve students' achievement in the sixth form.
- Improve teachers' lesson planning to take more account of the needs of individual students.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students join the school with attainment that is higher than expected for their age. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are well above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards have improved further; in 2007 the proportion of students with five or more good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was 68% compared with a national average of 46%. Unconfirmed results for 2008, in both the Key Stage 3 national tests and at GCSE, indicate that these high standards have risen further. Evidence seen during the inspection indicates that the rising trend of performance in Key Stages 3 and 4 is set to continue.

Over the school as a whole, the achievement of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good. Examination and test results, together with evidence from the inspection, confirm that in Key Stages 3 and 4 students make outstanding progress and achieve much better than similar students in other schools. They meet challenging targets. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is enhanced through the school's specialist status, where opportunities for broadening their cultural understanding are very effective. For example, inspectors observed students using aspects of different cultures as a stimulus for their art work. The exchange partnership with a school in Soweto provides a rich source of cultural experiences for both groups of students. Students show respect for each

other and enjoy good relationships with their teachers. Students say that they thoroughly enjoy their time at school and this is reflected in their excellent attendance and good behaviour.

Students say that there is very little bullying, and when it does occur, the school deals with it effectively. They feel safe in the school and they know who to turn to if they have a problem. Students show a good understanding of the benefits of living healthy lifestyles and enjoy a wide range of physical and other activities during and after school. Their contribution to the wider community, for example, through fundraising activities, is good. Students take on responsibilities readily, including an increasing role in evaluating the quality of teaching. Preparation for later life, through the development of their basic skills and interpersonal skills is good. Students' understanding of work-related issues is supported effectively through work experience, work shadowing and enterprise days.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school accurately judges the quality of teaching and learning as good; a high proportion of the lessons observed were good and some were outstanding. Good levels of independent and collaborative working are evident. Teachers' good subject knowledge and the students' positive attitudes contribute to their enjoyment of school as do the positive relationships between the students and staff. The increasing use of ICT is also having a positive effect on learning. Teachers are increasingly encouraging students to take more responsibility for their own learning. For example, in many of the lessons seen, students were able to assess their work and that of others using clear criteria and this helped them to understand how they could improve in the future. In the small number of less successful lessons, teachers' plans did not fully meet the needs of the whole ability range in the class. The school has effective arrangements for sharing good practice and is working to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding overall and has several distinctive and unusual features. For example, all Year 9 students enter a GCSE examination in performing arts with high levels of success. All students study dance in Key Stage 3 and in Year 7, a newly introduced 'Learn to Learn' programme is helping students to develop thinking skills and become more independent learners. The curriculum is developing and is increasingly tailored to the needs of the individual. For example, in Year 9 opportunities to start GCSE mathematics and AS level philosophy in Year 11 cater well for the most able students. The proportion of students who choose to study modern language courses at Key Stage 4 is above target. The availability at Key Stage 4 of an excellent range of science courses also caters well for the full range of students' abilities.

Effective links with the local college and organisations enable the school to offer more vocational courses, including individual work placements. An increasing number of students benefit from a personalised timetable. The breadth of provision and the school's ability to cater for individual needs have made a major contribution to enhancing students' progress both socially and academically. The coherence of the curriculum is strengthened by the provision of a 14-19 'pathway' involving performing arts and science. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities further enrich the students' experiences, particularly in sport and the arts.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Arrangements to link academic and pastoral support are good and help students to meet challenging targets. Members of staff know the students well. Students say that they can turn to adults for help regarding academic or personal difficulties; they feel that the school is an inclusive community and that they are valued and respected. Students receive good support when they move into the school and this enables them to settle quickly. Parents feel positively about the induction process, one describing it as 'exceptionally good'. Support for vulnerable students, including those who are looked-after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is both sensitive and effective. Very effective measures to promote and maintain excellent attendance include electronic records and rapid intervention. All necessary child protection and safeguarding requirements are met. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. However, a small number believe that communication with home could be better and inspectors agree. Good guidance has helped students to make informed choices about staying in education, moving to employment or further training. The school operates a very effective system for monitoring academic progress. Students know their targets and regular reviews allow staff opportunities to monitor progress. Where potential underachievement is identified, the school provides effective, and in some cases very effective, intervention and support.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior team lead the school well. Leaders and managers throughout the school have introduced effective strategies for monitoring the progress of individual students. Challenging targets, together with effective monitoring and intervention, have made a major contribution to improved standards at Key Stages 3 and 4. Managers know their staff well; they monitor the performance of departmental and pastoral staff rigorously. Where weaker teaching has been identified in the past, managers have been quick to intervene and provide appropriate support, and as a result, performance has improved. Resources are well managed; for example, investment in additional classroom resources such as ICT facilities has led to improved teaching. Governors know the school well and provide strong levels of challenge to senior leaders and other staff. Financial management is good and the school provides good value for money.

The school values inclusion highly and has developed the curriculum successfully to cater for a wide range of students' needs. The school's specialist status has had a widespread and very positive impact on both provision and students' achievement. Managers from within the specialisms have led whole-school developments in teaching and learning and have helped to introduce more varied teaching styles across the school. The school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion, for example, through its close collaboration with primary schools and the local community police.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	3
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	2	3

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
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	1	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

Inspection of Bridgewater High School, Warrington, WA4 3AE

You will recall that a team of inspectors and I inspected your school recently. This letter is to tell you what we found. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views.

We agree with the overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire: Bridgewater High School is a good and improving school. Standards are well above average and you achieve well. This is the result of the good teaching and guidance that your teachers provide and the outstanding range of suitable courses on offer.

The inspection team was particularly impressed by the way that the school's specialist status contributes to your learning and personal development. You behave well and your excellent attendance is much better than that seen in most schools. You told us that you feel safe in school and enjoy all that the school has to offer. We enjoyed seeing your active participation in lessons and hearing about your involvement in extra-curricular activities.

The school is well led and managed. In order to make Bridgewater High School an even better school, we have asked the governors, headteacher and staff to ensure that:

- those of you in the sixth form make better progress
- more teaching focuses on the needs of individuals within the class.

You can play your part in improving the school through continuing to attend regularly and taking full advantage of the strong support and guidance that your teachers offer. I wish you well for the future.