

The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116991
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	326512
Inspection date	9 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Lawton
Headteacher	Sara Catlow-Hawkins
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2005
School address	Hampton Dene Road Tupsley Hereford HR1 1UU
Telephone number	01432 347504
Fax number	01432 278220

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The team evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement in Key Stage 4, the quality of provision in Key Stage 4, and leadership and management. They gathered evidence from interviews with governors, staff and students, lesson observations, analysis of documentation and observations of the school during the working day. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the team 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 is a larger than average Voluntary Aided (VA) Church of England comprehensive school in the Diocese of Hereford. The school has specialist status for technology and modern foreign languages and is a designated training school. Almost two thirds of students come from the immediate area with the others coming from many different areas of the city and surrounding area. Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has a unit, the Kielder Centre, for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This means the school has a larger than average proportion of students with a statement of special educational need. A new headteacher started in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

At the time of its last inspection the school was judged outstanding; the new headteacher's excellent leadership has built upon that success so that the school has continued to improve and is still judged to be outstanding. Students are very keen to let visitors know how good they feel the school is. They say they really like their studies because staff are very supportive and they enjoy all aspects of school life. They are particularly ebullient about the very good sports opportunities. Many are junior sports leaders and support the school community when others take part in school teams. Recently the school fielded a total of 12 rugby teams on a Saturday and this shows the dedication of both students and staff. Others take part in a wide variety of performing arts opportunities outside of lessons, or clubs like science. The school is at the centre of the local community and has recently opened a youth club, as part of its extended school provision, which is very well attended. Students have an excellent moral understanding of issues, which affect their lives and also the broader community, including those abroad. They actively support a school in Uganda and some of those who had visited it recently recounted that it had had a marked impact upon their lives. The strong Christian ethos is well supported by students; it gives them a very good spiritual awareness, which also ensures the school is a harmonious place where students socialise very well. Whilst there are very few students from minority ethnic groups at the school, governors and staff ensure students have a very good understanding of what constitutes unacceptable attitudes. Behaviour is generally very good but at times some individuals fail to live up to the high expectations of the school. A small number of parents also expressed concerns over behaviour, particularly over boisterous play in part of the school grounds, which was confirmed by students. Students are able to influence what happens in school and they are seen as an integral part of subject reviews. The school sets high standards for itself and for its students. It strives to reach challenging targets and has been successful in meeting nearly all of these in 2008. Students enter the school with broadly average standards. In Key Stage 3, they make good progress to gain high test results. Students consistently attain very high standards at Key Stage 4. The proportion that gains five or more higher level GCSE passes, including mathematics and English, is well above average. The total number of GCSE points gained by students is exceedingly high and well above the national figure. This shows excellent achievement whilst the students are at school. A high proportion of students are successful with a modern foreign language and design and technology at GCSE which reflects the school's specialisms. Results are also high in mathematics and science. All students gain suitable qualifications because the school's strong emphasis on inclusion means that students enter a wide variety of courses available from the excellent curriculum. For example Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualification in Sport, NVQ or double award GCSE in engineering or a vocational qualification in hairdressing or gamekeeping. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are excellently provided for within the Kielder Centre and many of these students have transferred by choice from a designated special school. Well qualified and trained support staff have a significant impact on the achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students are very well prepared for the world of work or to further their education when they leave school. Nearly all go into training, employment or further education and students say they receive good guidance on the next steps. They receive good teaching with many lessons being outstanding. Relationships are a strength of lessons and teaching is generally engaging. Lessons tend to be pacy and students said they much preferred opportunities to discuss their work and work together in pairs or groups. Sometimes insufficient advice is given in written feedback on how

to improve. Academic guidance is available from subject teachers, subject leaders, pastoral heads and form tutors, which is pertinent and focused. However, nobody has overall responsibility to ensure students are making the progress expected in a consistent and coherent way. The school makes excellent use of its specialist status. Technology is used well and modern foreign languages are enjoyed by many students. The strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and supporting other schools and prospective entrants to teaching, as a training school, are significant features. Governors are an integral part of the highly effective management team of the school. They are actively involved through their various committees and ensure a suitable balance of challenge and support. They take part in comprehensive departmental reviews. These, along with a rigorous school evaluation, including views from parents and students, are used to formulate a school improvement plan to make sure the school is always getting better and demonstrate an excellent capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure a coherent and consistent approach to academic guidance, with form tutors and pastoral staff having clear roles and responsibilities.

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

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

10 October 2008 Dear Students Inspection of The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School, Hereford, HR1 1UU Dear Students I visited your school recently, with my colleague, met some of you at lunchtime, and talked to others during lessons and at break. We were very impressed with your friendliness and helpfulness and how proud you are of your school. We can fully understand why you are so positive, and we agree that you attend an outstanding school. It helps you to mature socially, become more aware of the world around you and makes sure you achieve some excellent examination results. Staff care for you very well, and you are very well prepared for each stage of your education, including for college or the world of work. We were particularly impressed by the excellent support for the students in the Kielder Centre and how engaged and happy they were with their work. Standards are high and you achieve exceptionally well in your GCSE examinations. This is because you enjoy some good lessons and a highly appropriate curriculum lets you make informed choices for your courses. Behaviour is generally very good but a small number of parents and some of you commented that at times a few students could be a little silly. This is something you can improve to help your school and your fellow students. You have a very good understanding of what you need to do to become healthy and many of you take part in a wide range of sports. I was impressed by how many teams the school puts out on a Saturday. You told me that you enjoyed an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, especially sport and the performing arts. You are also proud of the good work you do supporting younger students in your school, as peer supporters or sports leaders. You know your targets and receive good academic guidance but as yet this is not as good as it could be. We have asked the school to make sure that there is greater consistency between class teachers, subject and pastoral leaders, and form tutors so that the support is fully effective. Your new headteacher has carried on the good work of the school which is extremely well led and managed. Your views and those of your parents are taken fully into account to see how things can improve further. Staff are all very focused on seeing how the school can improve from its already very high standard. I wish you well in this excellent and supportive school. Thank you again for your cooperation. Yours sincerely Michael Smith Her Majesty's Inspector