

Bowland High: The School with Specialist Status in Performing Arts

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119726
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327118
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Vincent Ashworth HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	531
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Vanessa Townson
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Cox
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
School address	Riversmead Grindleton Clitheroe Lancashire BB7 4QS
Telephone number	01200 441374
Fax number	01200 441633

Age group	11–16
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Inspection number	327118

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's inspectors.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement and standards; the quality of the curriculum; pupils' personal development and the quality of care and guidance provided to them; aspects of teaching and learning. Evidence was collected from: the school's own self-evaluation; national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; planning and monitoring documents; direct observation of the school at work; meetings with staff and pupils and from parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector 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 the report.

Description of the school

Bowland High School is a smaller than average sized school. It is a non-selective school in a selective area. Pupils are drawn from a wide area and demand for places is very high. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Although located in an area of relative prosperity, some of the rural communities served by the school are in isolated areas where access to services is restricted. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is low. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs has increased slightly and is higher than average. The proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to the national picture. As an Extended School, Bowland High School offers services beyond the school day to pupils and the community. The school has specialist status for performing arts and has achieved Healthy Schools status and the Sportsmark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Bowland High School is an outstanding school that provides the highest quality of education and care for its pupils. An exceptionally high regard for pupils' personal development and well-being coupled with a strong duty of care are at the very core of the school's academic success. The most striking feature about this school is the pervading sense of community and fellowship that comes about from teachers knowing their pupils so extremely well. Consequently pupils flourish and develop into mature, articulate and confident young adults. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and value highly the equal attention given to the development of their children's academic, social and emotional needs. One parent's comment is typical of many received during the inspection, 'pupils feel valued and are very proud of their school'. Another stated, 'the school has more than lived up to my high expectations'. A few parents commented on the limitations of the dining facilities.

The ability profile of pupils when they enter the school is broadly average, with relatively low numbers in the higher ability range. Pupils make very rapid progress and attain higher than average standards in national tests taken at the end of Year 9. Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 3 is outstanding and consequently they move into Key Stage 4 brimming with confidence and ambition. They continue to make strong progress in Years 10 and 11 and attain high standards in GCSE examinations. Standards are exceptionally high in mathematics, biology, expressive arts, media studies and dance. In 2008, the proportion of pupils who attained five A* to C grades including English and mathematics reached an all time high of 72%. A significantly higher proportion of pupils attain a good grade in at least two science subjects than do so nationally. Standards in English are above average and improving. Pupils' progress in this subject, although never less than satisfactory, lags behind the very strong progress they make in other core subjects. Improvements in the management of English mean that pupils currently in Year 11 are making better than expected progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers.

Pupils have a clear sense of fairness and respect the views of others. Their thorough enjoyment of school is seen in very high levels of attendance and their exemplary behaviour. They particularly appreciate the emphasis on encouragement and recognition of their achievements. Pupils feel safe around the school because they say they feel part of one big family. They know they can get help to sort out problems quickly. The importance of rest, diet and exercise to health and well-being is understood and acted upon. Through their regular involvement in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and school clubs, they develop as well-rounded individuals. Pupils do not hold back in making their views and opinions heard. The school council represents the pupil voice very well and has made significant improvements to the school environment. Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously, including their involvement in staff appointments and membership of the governing body. A strong emphasis on work related learning means that pupils acquire the entrepreneurial and team working skills they will require in future life. This, combined with strong numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology skills ensures that they are outstandingly well prepared for the next stage of their education or for employment.

Visits to lessons during the inspection reinforced the accuracy of the school's evaluation about the quality of teaching, which is good with some exemplary features. Positive and good-humoured relationships between staff and pupils create a purposeful and highly supportive ambience for learning. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects and high expectations

of what their pupils can do. In lessons observed, pupils made excellent progress and demonstrated confidence in their abilities to think analytically, resolve problems and engage in well reasoned discussions and debates. In the best lessons teachers challenge pupils well and have the confidence to stand back and let pupils make learning their own. However, this is not consistently the case as not all teachers ensure that pupils' individual needs are systematically planned for and met in lessons. This is something that the school has recognised; plans are well underway to ensure that that all lessons are as good as the very best. The school's systems for setting individual targets and tracking pupils' progress are excellent and well used by teachers. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking. For example, comments on pupils' marked work do not always provide sufficiently clear and incisive comments to help them improve. Good practice was seen in the quality of marking in pupils' work in English.

The school has worked hard and successfully to develop its curriculum which is now outstanding; it contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. The school has embedded the new Key Stage 3 curriculum very well, with excellent opportunities for cross-curricular working. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is further enriched by performing arts lessons and the opportunity to learn three modern foreign languages. Key Stage 4 provides an excellent range of academic and vocational courses, including options to undertake qualifications in the workplace. The school does everything within its power to offer personalised programmes of study that meet the individual needs and aspirations of all pupils. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme is exemplary; it empowers pupils to actively contribute to both their school and local community and to appreciate that with rights come responsibilities. For example, pupils in Year 10 undertake placements across a wide range of voluntary, community and public sector settings. This enables them to meaningfully apply what they learn in the classroom by getting involved in activities that make a real difference to other people's lives.

The rich variety of extra-curricular activities on offer is well supported and appreciated by the pupils. Facilities for sport and physical exercise have improved significantly since the last inspection and there are plans for even more improvements to outdoor facilities, something which has been a concern of both pupils and parents. Senior managers actively monitor the take up of extra-curricular activities which ensure that every pupil is able to gain full advantage of the wonderful opportunities the school provides. The increased involvement of boys in dance, drama and performing arts is commendable.

The outstanding care, guidance and support provided to pupils reflect the school's strongly inclusive ethos. Teachers monitor their pupils' academic and personal development assiduously. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very effective support tailored to their needs; as a consequence they progress seamlessly to further study or employment when they leave school. The few pupils at risk of disaffection receive well tailored support and guidance, which keep them engaged and on-track. Appropriate systems for child protection are in place and meet current requirements. Transition arrangements into school and between key stages are well managed. Pupils feel very well informed about courses when making GCSE choices. They receive excellent careers advice and guidance; this helps them to make informed choices about their future studies and employment.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher's drive, ambition for the school and clear educational direction has had a significant impact on pupils' achievement and their personal development. He is very well supported by a talented senior leadership team who are equally committed in their pursuit of excellence. The process of self-evaluation is extremely thorough; it results in an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Managers at all levels are clear about where further work needs to be done

and appropriate action is being taken to address issues. Rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is used very effectively to target improvement. The school takes account of the views of pupils, parents and other groups, which have helped it to become a valued community resource. The school's work on developing pupils' awareness of diversity, their understanding of different communities and their sensitivity to the needs of others, underpin its good contribution to community cohesion. The school is aware of the need to create more opportunities for pupils to work alongside and share experiences with young people from different cultural backgrounds and faiths.

The school's specialist status in performing arts is being used very well to underpin improvement and innovation in the school. The inspired and energetic management of this aspect of the school's work has had a very positive impact in terms of enhancing the curriculum, enriching pupils' learning and providing pupils with the drive and ambition to achieve. Governance continues to be of a consistently high quality; the school benefits enormously from the unlimited support and unrelenting challenge provided by governors. Bowland High School is an outward-facing school; collaboration with the local 14-19 strategy group has forged very strong partnerships with other schools and colleges of further education. This adds significant value to the quality of pupils' experience and prepares them well for the transition into further education and training. Finances are carefully managed and resources and accommodation have been much improved in recent years. Some aspects of the school's older buildings continue to provide significant challenge; this is exacerbated by the very high demand for places. Senior managers and governors have done everything within their powers to overcome these hurdles. The school offers excellent value for money, and its capacity to improve is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of feedback on pupils' marked work.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1

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	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
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**

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bowland High: The School with Specialist Status in Performing Arts, Lancashire, BB7 4QS

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently. You helped me to understand how your school works and what makes it so special. I was also pleased that so many of your parents took the time to complete the questionnaire I sent. The vast majority of parents are extremely supportive of your school because they feel you enjoy school, you are safe there, your behaviour is excellent and that Mr Cox and his team are first-rate managers. I agreed with these views and judged your school to be outstanding.

You are a real credit to the school because you achieve high standards in your work and make excellent progress. What struck me the most about the lessons I visited was your very positive attitude to learning and the respect you show for each other and the adults who work with you. As you grow up, you become confident, capable and mature young people. You use your budding entrepreneurial skills with flair and compassion to raise funds for many charitable causes. Your teachers have a detailed knowledge of your individual needs; they are able to nurture your talents and skills, so that you thrive and develop in self-confidence. Through your involvement in the performing arts, you develop the talent to explore and extend all your personal, social and academic skills and make full use of them in different contexts. This prepares you exceptionally well for when you leave school and move on to further education or training.

The school is working hard to make sure that all your lessons are as good as the very best. However, I noticed that sometimes teachers' comments on your homework and coursework did not always give you enough detail or advice on how to improve your grades. I have asked the school to improve this.

I wish you all the very best for the future and look forward to your next performance at The Grand in Clitheroe!

Vincent Ashworth

Her Majesty's Inspector