

Bishop Vesey's Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103535
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336102
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Bernard Campbell HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	914
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clive Richards
Headteacher	David Iddon
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2006
School address	Lichfield Road Sutton Coldfield West Midlands
Telephone number	0121 250 5400
Fax number	0121 250 5420
Email address	sw@bishopveseys.bham.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Inspection number	336102

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of their time in classes, observed 28 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement plans, monitoring records and safeguarding documentation. They also took account of questionnaires from 469 parents and carers, and 132 students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- current and past progress made by students in the main school and the sixth form and how that has improved
- the extent to which teaching and the use of assessment challenges and motivates students
- the effectiveness of the curriculum and care, guidance and support in promoting personal development and achievement
- what senior and middle leaders have done to bring about improvements.

Information about the school

Bishop Vesey's Grammar School is a voluntary aided, selective state grammar school for boys, with a mixed sixth form. Students are selected by ability and the intake is across Birmingham and beyond. About a fifth of the sixth form is made up of girls. The proportion eligible for free school meals is low and the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very low. The proportion of minority ethnic students has increased in recent years. The majority of students are White British. The school is a Specialist Language College and became a Training School in 2007. It is a 'Sportsmark Gold' centre of excellence.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Bishop Vesey's Grammar School is a good school. This over-subscribed school has positively embraced the increased popularity of the school among ethnic minority parents across Birmingham and beyond. It is outstanding in promoting community cohesion through its international links with several schools across the world, the community language provision for children and adults, the active engagement with faith communities and the celebration of cultural diversity in the life of the school. These contribute significantly to the positive ethos of the school and its reputation in the wider community.

Achievement is outstanding. All students enter the school with high levels of attainment, especially in mathematics and science. They make good progress and gain high GCSE results. The proportion gaining A*-A grades has increased year on year, and by a greater margin than nationally. Sixth form students attain high A level results and almost all succeed in gaining a place at their first or second choice university. The school has high aspirations to raise attainment further and increase the rate of progress. There is a degree of inconsistency in the levels of attainment and progress across subjects and potential for further improvement.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students are keen and ambitious to succeed; this contributes significantly to their progress. They think deeply about their own views, express them well in reasoned discussion, and are respectful of the right of others to hold differing views. An excellent sixth form assembly was observed where party election candidates made outstanding speeches which stimulated high quality debate. Students have an excellent first hand understanding of the similarities and differences of other cultures and religions. They praise the excellent range of activities that value religious beliefs and celebrate the diversity of cultures.

Students make a good contribution to the life of the school and the wider community, especially the sixth form, through charity work, and through participation in sporting and cultural events in the city. However, in the main school a few students do not think that staff take sufficient interest in their views. The school leadership rightly believes that students should be given an even greater role in classroom learning and school life and this is an area currently being developed.

Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that able students can attain high standards. Relationships are positive and teachers encourage students to ask questions and to discuss ideas. This helps to develop their understanding. In a few cases teachers talk for too long, instead of allowing students to lead their own discussion or actively carry out their own research. The curriculum and the procedures for care, guidance and support

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

are good and meet students' needs well.

The overall academic progress made by students in the sixth form is outstanding. Sixth form teaching is highly effective. Excellent monitoring and early intervention prevents individuals from falling behind. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Strategic plans have been translated into highly effective actions resulting in an improved trend in outcomes.

The headteacher provides a clear vision and strong drive for improved performance. The quality of senior and middle leadership has been improved and is good. Since the last inspection, there has been sustained improvement in outcomes at GCSE and A-level. Decisive action has been taken to improve performance in certain subjects. The school has recently used the leadership role of the Language College to improve the rigour of the school self evaluation, quality assurance and action planning. The Training College designation has been used effectively to develop action research targeted at specific aspects of school improvement and to enhance the continuing professional development of staff in this school and partner schools. The specialisms are now making significant contributions to improving the learning culture of the school. The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students gaining A* A grades at GCSE by ensuring that more teaching is outstanding and student progress is accelerated.
 - Further increase opportunities for students to develop leadership in lessons and in school life.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Almost all students gain five GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics. In 2009, 62% of the GCSE grades attained by students were at A* or A grade compared to the national average of 20%. There is some variation in subjects with lower results in English. However there has been significant improvement in A*A results in English over the last three years. The improved results have been brought about by improvements in leadership and management across a range of subjects.

In 2009, the success of students in gaining five GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics was significantly higher than predicted. The school has set more challenging targets to increase the progress of students and these have begun to take effect. In the current Year 11 assessment data shows that students are making better than expected progress in most subjects including mathematics, science and in most of the specialist language subjects. This is corroborated by the early results in GCSE science modules and modern foreign language oral tests. The progress made in GCSE English has improved year on year and is now satisfactory due to improved schemes of work, more rigorous assessment and stronger teamwork. In Year 9, detailed tracking and assessment of students in all subjects shows that the great majority of students

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

made better than expected progress. Good systems of support for the relatively few students with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure they make similar progress to their peers.

Students are thoughtful and reflective and are confident that they can experiment and test their ideas without fear of failure. They listen well and respect other people's point of view. They co-operate and collaborate very well in lesson activities. They relish challenge and are keen to tackle problems and work out their own solutions. Their strong skills and confidence to work independently are highly relevant to their potential for success in their future lives.

Students feel safe in school and are able to raise any concerns with staff. They have mature attitudes. They are welcoming and positive and behave considerately towards each other. They have many and increasingly varied opportunities to participate in physical activity. They understand the need to eat healthily and respond well to the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles. Attendance is high.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Teachers' questions provide good challenge. This helps students to clarify and understand concepts and ideas and gain detailed knowledge. Teachers plan a good range of activities that sustain students' interest and develop higher order learning. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace. On occasion, lesson objectives are not used sufficiently to guide and reflect on progress. Good quality academic advice and guidance means that students are clear about what they need to do to improve their work to reach their challenging targets and secure high grades in tests and examinations. However this is not always recorded so that they, their parents and teachers can check on progress. Regular checking of students' understanding in lessons helps to sustain the momentum of learning. The effective use of regular assessment to track the progress of individuals and the class ensures that effective interventions are quickly provided to help students catch up missed work. Assessment is not used consistently well to plan work. For example, in a few classes higher attaining pupils are not fully stretched because their work is too easy.

The academic curriculum meets the needs and ambitions of high attaining students well. It also provides effectively for the needs and interests of different groups and individuals. For example, there are opportunities to gain accreditation in home languages. It provides effective support for the small number of students with English as an additional language who need help to understand the technical language used in some lessons. There are many well attended sports, arts and other clubs that raise aspirations and add to students' enjoyment of school. The many educational trips, including those to other countries, broaden students' horizons. The breadth of courses has recently being extended to include vocational options provided by partners.

The few vulnerable students are supported well, enabling them to continue their studies appropriately. The school makes good arrangements to ensure that transition from a large number of primary schools is smooth. Good quality advice and guidance enables students make appropriate choices about their GCSE and sixth form courses. The school has improved behaviour management by introducing an effective 'consequences' system, used consistently by all staff.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There is now an energetic and committed group of senior and middle leaders who are working to a shared improvement agenda, providing good direction and support for the

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

school. New data systems have been introduced which have improved the monitoring and evaluation of student progress. Rigorous attention is given to the analysis of the performance of different groups of students to ensure equal opportunities. Targets are more ambitious and are being used effectively to raise achievement. New systems of departmental review have strengthened the rigour of evaluation and action plans are clearly focused on improving student progress. Senior and middle leaders are working more collaboratively to solve problems and share good practice and there are increased levels of accountability. The robust monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning gives the leadership an accurate picture of the quality of teaching across the school. Professional development is targeted accurately on areas for improvement. For example, coaching and training in class management and use of assessment has helped some teaching move from satisfactory to good.

The governing body has a clear vision and ambitious aims for the school. They are highly involved and committed and provide a useful range of expertise to the school. They have a good understanding of how the school is improving and of what further needs to be done. Safeguarding procedures are effective. The school adopts recommended good practice across all relevant areas. Clear guidance helps ensure school's child protection obligations are met.

The school has a highly positive relationship with parents and carers, regularly requesting their views. Parents are well informed about school life through newsletters and email. Well-structured systems help ensure effective liaison with parents and carers. Partnerships with agencies are effective in promoting students' well-being.

The school has a good range of partnerships with local primary and secondary schools which contributes effectively to professional development, including language teaching in primary schools. Through effective marketing to local schools, businesses and families, opportunities have been provided for increasing numbers of adults and young people from a range of backgrounds and from all over Birmingham to learn languages, for work and leisure.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students academic progress overall is outstanding. Students gain a high percentage of A and B grades and they succeed in gaining access to their chosen university. In most courses the rate of progress is good and in some it is outstanding. The level of student involvement in lessons is high which contributes strongly to their outstanding progress. A high proportion of students stay in the sixth form to successfully complete their courses. Attendance is high. Students thrive in the sixth form and make extensive contributions to the school, for example through school council activities and providing help in language lessons in the main school. Students run an energetic 'Eco' group which contributes to sustainable development.

Classroom relationships are excellent. Teachers' enthusiastic use of subject knowledge motivates students. Learning activities are interesting and stretch students. Students have excellent opportunities to contribute to and lead activities. The use of peer and self assessment is highly effective in promoting learning.

The curriculum meets the academic aspirations of the vast majority of students and the school has also begun to offer vocational options with partner providers, when students express an interest. Opportunities for students to pursue their own academic interests through Open University courses or extended projects are highly valued. The extra curricular provision in sport, music and drama is strong.

Heads of year contribute very effectively to the leadership of the sixth form and have a very clear overview of students' academic and personal development. Their work in monitoring and supporting students is highly valued. The support by the sixth form mentor is highly regarded and enables students to access additional support from outside agencies. Students' views are taken seriously and have led to improvement in teaching and the quality of their learning experience. A very well devised programme for supporting students through application process ensures that practically all manage to get first or second choice of university place.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers say they are happy with the school. They believe their children enjoy school and feel their child is safe. They think the teaching is good and they say they are well informed about their child's progress. The inspectors agree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 469 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 914 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	240	51	222	47	3	1	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	247	53	218	46	4	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	230	49	221	47	13	3	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	254	54	201	43	12	3	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	232	49	227	48	9	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	170	36	258	55	31	7	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	138	29	272	58	37	8	8	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	234	50	199	42	8	2	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	238	51	213	45	12	3	2	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	182	39	244	52	26	6	6	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	149	32	261	56	25	5	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	245	52	208	44	12	3	2	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	303	64	157	33	6	1	2	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 April 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, West Midlands, B74 2NH

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much indeed. We judged that yours is a good school. These were the things we liked most about your school.

Achievement is outstanding. You enter the school with high attainment, make good progress and gain high GCSE results.

You have an outstanding sixth form. Students attain high A-level results and almost all succeed in gaining a place at their first or second choice university.

You are keen and ambitious to succeed which contributes significantly to your good progress. You think deeply, express views well in reasoned discussion, and are respectful of the right of others to hold differing views.

Your school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. You praised the excellent range of activities that value religious beliefs and celebrate the diversity of cultures, in this country and abroad.

To help the school to improve further, we have said that senior leaders should:

Increase the proportion gaining A* A grades at GCSE by ensuring that more teaching is outstanding and student progress is accelerated.

Further increase opportunities for students to develop leadership in lessons and in school life.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.