

Bramhall High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106139
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	336624
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Reporting inspector	Janet Palmer 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 of pupils on the school roll	1320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Brown
Headteacher	Mr John Peckham
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 42 lessons and 42 teachers for approximately 30 minutes per lesson. Approximately 75% of inspection time was spent looking at learning. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students and a local authority representative. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including 427 parental questionnaires.

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

- students' achievement at Key Stage 4, particularly in English and mathematics
- the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of support systems and intervention strategies
- students' behaviour; their attitudes to others and to learning
- the quality and consistency of teaching and learning across the school
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels and the capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Bramhall High is a larger than average comprehensive school. In 2004 the school achieved specialist status for science and it is a designated training school. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average, as is the proportion of those eligible for free school meals. The great majority of students are of White British heritage. The school serves a mostly affluent population, although there are some small pockets of socio-economic disadvantage. The school has achieved the Healthy School, Sportsmark, Artsmark and International School awards.

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

3

Main findings

Bramhall High provides its students with a good education characterised by good and outstanding outcomes in students' personal development and excellent levels of care, guidance and support. Most students enjoy school, their attendance is excellent and the school is held in high regard by most parents and carers.

Students' success in gaining five or more A* to C grades in GCSE examinations is outstanding and has improved year-on-year. However, national data shows that since 2006, the progress students have made relative to their starting points is satisfactory overall. The subjects in which students progressed least well were English and mathematics, which have performed below expectations for the past three years. The school identified the need to accelerate progress and has implemented a rigorous programme for improvement; the effects of which can be seen in the much improved early entry English GCSE results in November 2009 and the good progress in lessons observed by inspectors. Students say they feel very safe and cared for in school and the great majority of parents and carers agree. Students demonstrate good attitudes to learning and good behaviour in lessons and around the school. They make excellent contributions to the school and wider community through student leadership, citizenship activities and charitable events which contribute very well to their overall personal development and the skills they need to secure good future economic well-being.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Most of the teaching is challenging, with the result that students are well supported in their learning. Most teachers have high expectations, strong subject knowledge and engage the students well. In the best lessons, teachers know their students and have a good understanding of their prior learning; they use this knowledge to plan to meet individual needs. In the less successful lessons, the needs of individuals are not taken into account fully, teaching assistants are not deployed effectively and the lack of appropriate challenge prevents students from making the progress of which they are capable. The use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory. The strongest teachers mark students' work diligently and use questioning effectively within lessons to ascertain and further students' understandings. However, this good practice is not applied consistently; some assessment and marking is cursory and does not always help students understand how to improve.

Vulnerable and disadvantaged students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive outstanding care and support which has a very positive effect on their personal development and well-being, enabling them to make progress commensurate with their peers. The school provides a good curriculum which accommodates well students' personal and academic needs and interests. Students

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appreciate the opportunity to begin some GCSE courses in Year 9 and enjoy the wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular provision that contributes so much to their personal development.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. Senior leaders and managers have effectively addressed most of the areas for improvement noted by the last inspection. For example, given their starting points, middle and lower ability students now make similar progress to their peers; the quality of teaching and learning has improved; and following the implementation of a new behaviour policy, students demonstrate good behaviour and attitudes. However, the monitoring of the work of subject departments remains inconsistent, particularly in relation to the quality of assessment and planning to meet individual needs. The governing body has a sound working knowledge of the school and is able to identify strengths and weaknesses; governors challenge senior leaders well and hold them to account. However, the use and analysis of whole-school tracking data is not sufficiently systematic to enable well informed planning for improvement. Self-evaluation lacks rigour and overestimates the school's effectiveness.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain improved progress, particularly in mathematics and English, by:
 - ensuring that leaders and managers communicate high expectations to the staff consistently about securing improvement
 - more systematic use and analysis of whole-school tracking data to better inform improvement planning.
- Further increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better through the robust monitoring and evaluation of:
 - the effectiveness of assessment strategies and the quality of marking
 - the quality of planning for the different needs of students in lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Progress is broadly satisfactory and an improving picture. In the lessons observed by inspectors, most students made good progress; they engaged well, tackling challenging tasks with enthusiasm. However, these improvements are not yet reflected in longer-term measures of progress. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar levels of progress to other students in the school and no particular groups of students underachieve. When students arrive at the school their attainment is higher than the national average and current levels of attainment are high at the end of Key Stage 4. The school has been successful in securing improvements in GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 over the past several years, although attainment in English at higher grades was significantly below the national average in 2009. The outcomes for students' personal development have improved since the last inspection and are now good and outstanding.

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The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is good. They are keen to take part in and influence the provision of a wide range of sporting activities and have a good understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. However, some regularly make unhealthy lunch choices and this is not monitored by the school. The great majority of students, their parents and carers report that the school environment is very safe. Students know who to go to if they experience or witness bullying and are confident that appropriate action will be taken. Students have a highly developed awareness of how to stay safe in practical lessons and outside of school.

Students demonstrate an outstanding commitment to improving the school and contributing to the wider community through activities such as the student council, sports council, music and drama performances, volunteering, and leadership activities including junior sports leadership work with local primary schools. Large numbers of students from across the age and ability range have received the headteacher's award for active citizenship within and beyond the school. Students' good social, moral and spiritual development is demonstrated by their willing engagement with imaginative and creative learning; their ability to relate well in teams and readiness to take responsibility for themselves and others. Students' cultural understanding is less well developed, limited by the lack of opportunities the school provides for them to engage with others from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Students at Bramhall High are prepared extremely well for their future economic well-being. They have an excellent understanding of future options and how to achieve their aspirations; they have good financial literacy and enjoy a very good range of work experience and business links.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1

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

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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	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall because teachers have good subject knowledge and make use of a wide variety of activities and teaching styles; as a result, students sustain well their motivation in lessons. Good use is made of interactive whiteboard technology and good opportunities for creative and independent learning further contribute to the enjoyment of learning and students' current good progress. However, a minority of teachers miss the chance to help students make more rapid progress by: not effectively assessing their understanding and using such information to help students know what they need to do to improve; and not always planning work that is appropriate to individual needs.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and offers a good range of choices including vocational courses and early entry to GCSE. These changes are popular with students as is the varied programme of extra-curricular activities which includes a wide range of sporting activities, the school orchestra, drama productions, a debating society and a range of charity fundraising activities.

Excellent transition arrangements ensure that students who join Year 7 or other year groups settle into the school quickly and smoothly. Case studies for vulnerable students demonstrate the very good arrangements the school has with external agencies, parents and carers to support their individual needs. The school tracks well students' progress in their personal well-being. Intervention strategies are carefully designed, contributing well to the outstanding care, guidance and support students enjoy.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

A large majority of parents and carers are confident that the school is well led and managed. Governance of the school is strong and governors are involved fully in setting priorities to tackle areas of underachievement. The effectiveness with which leaders and managers drive and secure improvement is satisfactory. They have focused on

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improving the quality of teaching to ensure improved outcomes, particularly in English and the school has developed a range of effective partnerships to promote learning and contribute to students' well-being. The school's science specialism is having a good impact on leading improvement and raising achievement, particularly in mathematics. However, leaders and managers do not always effectively communicate high expectations to the staff nor apply robust systems to monitor teachers' performance. As a result, overall improvements in students' progress have not been sufficiently rapid.

The school engages well with parents and carers, utilising new technologies such as the school web-site and emails to keep them up-to-date on developments. The school has developed good links with a variety of educational, business and other external agencies. This is particularly strong in the support the school receives from outside agencies to support the personal development of more vulnerable students. The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination effectively. For example, effective strategies put in place to raise the achievement of lower ability boys has resulted in their improved performance. The school's contributions to community cohesion are satisfactory. There is good engagement with the local community but planning for community cohesion is limited and students have too few opportunities to engage with people who represent the range of faiths, ethnicities, cultures and socio-economic groups beyond the local area. The school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

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Forty seven per cent of parents and carers gave their views and the great majority of responses were supportive of the school and its management. A very small minority did not feel that the school dealt effectively with unacceptable behaviour although inspection evidence judged students' behaviour to be good overall. A few of those who responded did not feel that the school took enough account of their suggestions and concerns nor helped them enough in supporting their children's learning; inspectors judged engagement with parents and carers to be good overall. A very large majority of parents and carers told us that their children enjoyed school and a similar proportion were happy overall with their children's experience at school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Bramhall High 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 427 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,320 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	147	34	249	58	23	5	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	196	46	217	51	8	2	3	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	155	36	238	56	26	6	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	141	33	240	56	32	7	5	1
The teaching is good at this school	119	28	272	64	25	6	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	107	25	267	63	42	10	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	85	20	299	70	27	6	5	1
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)	151	35	238	56	15	4	2	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	141	33	249	58	26	6	5	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	119	28	238	56	42	10	15	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	83	19	279	65	34	8	8	2
The school is led and managed effectively	136	32	250	59	19	4	9	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	186	44	217	51	18	4	5	1

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



5 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Bramhall High School, Stockport, SK7 2JT

After our visit to your school, I would like to share our findings with you and thank you for your friendly welcome and for taking time to talk to us.

Bramhall High is a good and improving school with some outstanding features. Your attainment is high and your success in gaining five or more good GCSE grades has improved year-on-year. However, the progress you have made over the past few years in English and mathematics has been below expectations for students who do as well as you do at Key Stage 2. Because of this, your teachers have prioritised your learning and progress, particularly in English and mathematics and, as a result, you are now making good progress towards meeting your targets, as the good November English GCSE result show.

Your personal development and well-being is good overall and some aspects are outstanding. You told us that, as a result of the excellent care, guidance and support you receive, you feel very safe and secure in school and that the few incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Your understanding of healthy lifestyles is good and many of you take part in sporting activities, although you do not always choose healthy options at lunchtime. We were impressed by your good behaviour and excellent contributions to the community through leadership activities, music, drama and charity fund-raising. Many of your teachers have good subject expertise; you engage well with the lessons and there are improved strategies in place to identify those who need extra help. The curriculum is good and now provides more vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and opportunities to begin GCSE courses in Year 9.

In order that staff can help you to continue to progress well we have recommended that the school undertake the following:

sustain improved progress, particularly in mathematics and English, by:

- ensuring that leaders and managers consistently communicate high expectations to the staff about securing improvement
- more systematic use and analysis of whole-school tracking data to better inform improvement planning.

further increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better through the robust

monitoring and evaluation of:

- the effectiveness of assessment strategies and the quality of marking
- the quality of planning for the different needs of students in lessons.

On behalf of the inspection team I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector

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