

# Boldon School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108730
<b>Local Authority</b>	South Tyneside
<b>Inspection number</b>	337133
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 June 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Tom Grieveson 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>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1014
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Joanne Buczynskyj
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Elizabeth Hayes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	New Road Boldon Colliery Tyne and Wear NE35 9DZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 33 lessons and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors, senior and middle leaders and members of staff, a local authority officer and school partnership representatives. A number of telephone conversations were held with parents. Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised a large sample of students' work, evaluated policy documents and subject plans. A detailed analysis of the school's tracking and assessment evidence was undertaken. The 98 inspection questionnaires from parents and carers were considered along with 139 completed by students and 51 by staff.

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

- the extent to which teachers are using assessment information when lessons are being planned so that they meet the needs of all students
- the extent to which the school is building the necessary capacity in order to tackle weaknesses and raise students' outcomes, particularly in those subjects where performance is weak
- the extent to which the curriculum is supporting improvements in students' learning, progress and attainment
- the school's effectiveness in reducing exclusions, improving attendance and tackling persistent absence.

## Information about the school

Boldon School is larger than average in size with a growing student intake. The new buildings were opened in 2006. It has specialist sports status with information and communications technology (ICT) as the second subject within the sport specialism. The school takes students from a wide catchment area, including from 30 adjacent primary schools and others in neighbouring local authorities. About one quarter of students are known to be eligible for a free school meal. A relatively low number comes from minority ethnic communities with almost all students having English as their first language. The school shares its site with Boldon Community Association; school facilities are made accessible to the local community through a shared use agreement in order to work towards achieving local targets for improving participation levels in physical activities. The school has been awarded Healthy School Status and the Gold No Smoking Award. The headteacher took up her post in September 2008.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Boldon School provides its students with a satisfactory and improving quality of education. The headteacher and senior leadership team have high expectations of students' capabilities and have focused the school resolutely on improving all aspects of provision and improving outcomes for students. Standards have risen markedly in the last two years to above average in the proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE passes, although further progress is required to improve students' attainment in mathematics and science. Examination results and inspection evidence demonstrate that the majority of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making satisfactory progress. School self-evaluation offers an honest appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses with improvement priorities well represented in school development planning. The school has secure capacity for further improvement.

Attendance rates have improved well and are now satisfactory and the school has also reduced the level of persistent absence to below target. Exclusions are well down on previous years. Most students demonstrate satisfactory behaviour although a small minority show a disregard for the learning needs of other students by exhibiting poor behaviour in lessons. Where this occurs it is not well managed by teachers. Most students say they feel safe in school and have confidence to report difficulties to staff. An increasing number have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and this is reflected in growing participation rates in sport-related activities. School council members are effective in representing the views of the wider student body and can confidently point to areas where they have influenced decision making.

Teaching is satisfactory, although about half of lessons seen during the inspection were good. However, too much remains satisfactory, and a small amount is inadequate, for the longstanding under-performance in some core subjects to be securely overcome. Of particular relevance is the inconsistent manner in which teachers assess students' learning and track their progress. In some departments, such as English and physical education, teachers assess students' work accurately and use their incisive knowledge of students' capabilities to drive learning forward and secure improvement. In some other departments, including mathematics and science, the quality of assessment information is too often inaccurate and lacking in depth. It is of little value when lessons are being planned and this results in the needs of some students not being sufficiently met. A significant factor is the variability in the impact of middle leaders in establishing effective assessment practice in their own departments, in holding staff to account for their performance and in setting high enough targets to reflect students' capabilities.

A satisfactory and improving curriculum offers students an extended choice, with

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pathways better matched to students' aspirations, needs and interests. Strong partnership working, with a widening group of providers, is also supporting more vulnerable students effectively. The school demonstrates satisfactory care for all students with increasingly effective support for the most vulnerable and those at most risk of exclusion. A relatively small proportion of the parents and carers of students at the school completed the inspection questionnaire. The majority of whom who did so were supportive of the school and its work although a significant minority of respondents expressed a number of concerns.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- In order to raise standards and improve the rate of progress made by all students the school should.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching in all departments but particularly in mathematics and science.
- Improve the consistency in the way teachers assess students' learning and ensure they use assessment information effectively when lessons are being planned so that the learning needs of all students are met, by:
  - – all departments fully implementing the school's assessment policy
  - – ensuring that all staff in all departments receive suitable training to improve their assessment skills
  - – making full use of ongoing assessment information when lessons are being prepared in order to comprehensively meet the needs of all students.
- Improve the consistency and quality of subject leadership in driving improvements in teaching and learning and in raising standards, by:
  - – ensuring that all subject leaders have a clear understanding of their role and responsibility for leading improvements in teaching and learning and raising standards
  - – achieving greater consistency in the way that subjects leaders monitor, challenge and support departmental staff to improve their practice
  - – ensuring that subject leaders demonstrate high expectations for all students given their capabilities and starting points and that these are reflected in the targets set for students
  - – ensuring that the accountability of subject leaders and staff for student outcomes is well understood.
- Improve the behaviour of a minority of students, by:
  - – ensuring consistency in the way that all teachers manage challenging behaviour and that they adhere to school routines at all times
  - – ensuring that all students understand the school's expectations of their behaviour and the rewards and sanctions associated with it.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

When students enter the school their overall attainment is below average and particularly so in English. GCSE examination results show that in 2009 the large majority of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, made satisfactory progress. The proportion gaining five or more good GCSE examination passes has risen sharply in the last two years. In 2009, 74% attained these grades although improved attainment was much less marked in some subjects, including mathematics and science where standards in both subjects remain well below average and with too few students attaining the higher grades.

The majority of students demonstrate satisfactory behaviour with some good behaviour in lessons and around the school. In most of the lessons observed during the inspection, students worked well together and were keen to engage in activities. They responded appropriately to the teachers' instructions, concentrated on their learning and showed commitment in completing their work. This was not the case everywhere, however. In a small number of the lessons, the behaviour of some students was poor, this disrupted the learning of others, distracted the teacher and significantly limited their progress.

Students' attendance has improved well and is now broadly average with the number of persistent absentees much reduced. Exclusion figures show a positive downward trend. Most students say they feel safe and are confident in approaching staff if they require help. Students highlight in particular, the support they receive from learning mentors as being particularly beneficial. Students show a good understanding of the factors which promote healthy lifestyles with large numbers engaged in physical education and sport-related activities. They willingly take on additional responsibilities with those on the school council representing their peers well. Many are actively involved in charity fundraising. Forty five students have achieved the 'Sports Leader Award' which has involved coaching in local primary schools. Students benefit from the concentration in tutorial sessions on a range of religious, moral, ethical and cultural issues. For example, one Year 8 class sensitively debated genocide in Rwanda gaining real depth and insight into the suffering and hardships endured by those affected.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> 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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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

### How effective is the provision?

While the quality of teaching is satisfactory there is inconsistency across year groups and subject departments. In English and physical education, for example, the pace and challenge engendered by teachers provides a high degree of motivation with students applying themselves well and making effective progress. The use of challenging questioning, well designed activities and purposeful interaction between teachers and students ensures they enjoy learning and work industriously in completing their tasks. Satisfactory lessons, however, are too often characterised by planning which lacks detail or recognition of students' prior learning. Lesson activities do not match the learning needs of all students, with some finding the work too easy while others find it too difficult. Where this occurs, students lack motivation to complete their tasks and this limits the progress which some are capable of making. In the few inadequate lessons, students are unclear about the purpose of the lesson, they become disinterested, teachers' expectations are too low and students' behaviour deteriorates with little progress being made.

The school has a well designed assessment and tracking system and much has been accomplished to enable senior staff and teachers to collate and analyse information about students' performance. However, its potential is hampered by inconsistencies in the rigour with which some departments assess students' learning and the limited use made of assessment information by teachers in these departments when lessons are being planned. Excellent practice is evident in departments such as English and physical education where assessment information is used well to drive learning forward. Its use in some other departments, including mathematics and science, is ineffective.

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Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been reviewed to provide greater depth and breadth and is now better matched to the needs and aspirations of different groups of students. The curriculum working group ensures on-going review with further innovations planned including the introduction of a two-year Key Stage 3 curriculum. The curriculum is satisfactory. It offers a suitable balance of vocational and academic courses so that older students can choose an appropriate pathway to support their future aspirations. Strong partnership working, with an increasing range of external providers, offers additional provision which is making a positive difference to the enjoyment and achievement of students at risk of being excluded or disaffected and has contributed well to increased attendance and reduced exclusions. The school is making important strides in developing additional enrichment activities. This includes the school's sports specialism which is starting to have a strong impact on students' commitment to health and sporting related activities. Opportunities to develop students' basic skills in other subject areas are, however, not well developed.

The school makes satisfactory arrangements for the care, guidance and support of students. Some aspects stand out, such as partnership working to support the most vulnerable students. Procedures to increase attendance and reduce persistent absence are also working effectively. Policies for managing behaviour have resulted in a much reduced number of exclusions although behaviour management strategies are not used effectively by all teachers in all lessons. The advice and support offered for students at key transition points is well respected by the students themselves.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team, has focused the school securely on improving the quality of provision as the basis for raising standards. The impact of this work is evident in higher standards at Key Stage 4, a much improved Key Stage 4 curriculum offer and in higher rates of attendance. Nonetheless, lack of consistency in the quality of subject leadership is limiting the progress being made in improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards in some departments. Too much variation in the manner in which middle leaders challenge and support the work of subject teachers is leading to marked differences in the performance of students between subjects.

Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. They have a keen



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awareness of the school's priorities and have ensured that, in most cases, actions are taken to tackle under-performance. Greater emphasis is now being given to strengthening further their challenge and support role. Partnership working with parents is satisfactory with the majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire commenting favourably on the school's work. However, a relatively high percentage of those who did respond expressed their reservations about aspects of the school's work and particularly in relation to the quality of parental consultation, the behaviour of students and the support parents receive so they can help their children. The school uses a range of appropriate routes to provide information to parents including a half termly mailshot, 'externally managed parents' surveys and transition events for Years 7, 9 and 11 students.

The school has a range of effective partnerships, including links to a local further education college, neighbouring schools, local businesses and a number of external agencies. These partnership activities are improving the school's provision and beginning to make an important contribution to students' achievement and well-being. Involvement in the regional Creative Partnership is providing broad cultural opportunities for students including artists in residence, promoting circus skills and involvement in talent shows.

The school has benefitted from the 'Gaining Ground' programme both as a lead department supporting other schools (English) and as the recipient of support from another school's lead department (mathematics). Partnerships forged through the sports specialism have provided additional funding to increase physical activity levels of students and members of the community. Safeguarding policy and procedures meet statutory requirements and are systematically reviewed. Staff and governors have engaged in appropriate training. Arrangements for working with other agencies are effective. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Students have a thorough understanding of their own community and opportunities for them to be involved in community life are increasing, for example, through the sports leadership and the young ambassador programme. The school engages in a range of cultural activities through existing partnerships. Opportunities to understand the more diverse communities across Britain and globally are less well developed and the school acknowledges there is work to be done in this area. Students benefit from work done in tutorial time and religious education lessons providing good opportunities to develop their knowledge of other cultures, and by tackling issues around diversity and prejudice. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>

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<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

The majority parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire responded positively about the work of the school. However, a significant minority of respondents gave negative views to some of the questions. Some parents and carers also submitted written comments both positive and negative. The negative responses and comments fall into three distinct categories. Firstly, concerns about how effectively the school consults with parents and carers; secondly concerns about students' behaviour and thirdly about how the school supports parents and carers so they can in turn support their child's learning. In relation to the first, governors have recently taken a decision to change the timings of the school day starting in September 2010 and a minority of the parents and carers who responded do not consider that they were adequately consulted about this decision. While the report's findings show that the majority of students demonstrate satisfactory, and at times good, behaviour the report identifies poor behaviour from a minority of students and the ineffective management of this behaviour by teachers, which resulted in students in these lessons making inadequate progress. Of those parents and carers who considered that the school does not support them sufficiently so they can support their child's learning, most written comments concerned the inconsistent approach to homework. In discussion with students, most consider that the amount of homework provided varies in frequency and quality between departments. Students agree that some teachers and departments provide good homework extension activities which build well from lessons but this is not consistent across the school. Inspection evidence confirms that while some homework seen was purposeful and supported learning this is not evident in all departments. Inspectors noted that homework was rarely mentioned by teachers during lesson observations.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Boldon 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 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1014 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	16	63	64	15	15	4	4
The school keeps my child safe	26	27	59	60	7	7	6	6
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	33	52	53	13	13	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	15	63	64	14	14	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	12	12	67	68	10	10	5	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	10	57	58	20	20	6	6
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	6	66	67	19	19	5	5
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)	14	14	63	64	12	12	3	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	14	60	61	14	14	5	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	16	58	59	14	14	6	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	10	55	56	18	18	10	10
The school is led and managed effectively	20	20	54	55	13	13	6	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	31	48	49	8	8	8	8

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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



17 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Boldon School, Boldon Colliery, NE35 9DZ

Thank you all for the helpful way you engaged with the inspection and particularly to those who gave their time to speak with us in meetings, around the school and in lessons. We are very grateful to you. The report is now complete and I want to share the inspection findings with you.

We have judged Boldon School as providing you with a satisfactory and improving education. The school has made secure progress since the previous inspection in 2007. The headteacher and senior leaders have focused the school's efforts on improving teaching and learning, the curriculum and the care, guidance and support which you receive. All are judged as being satisfactory. We recognise that standards overall are much higher than two years ago although much more work is required to help you achieve more highly in mathematics and science in particular. Nonetheless, the progress which the large majority of students are making is satisfactory.

We recognise that the large majority of students show due consideration for the welfare of others by behaving responsibly in lessons and around the school. Some students represent the school very well by showing good behaviour at all times and in all situations. As you told us however, and we agree, a minority of students do not behave well in lessons and disrupt learning for others.

We have asked the governors and senior staff to concentrate on making the following things better.

- Increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching in all subjects and in all year groups.
  - Ensure that your work is accurately assessed and that all teachers use this information when preparing lessons so that the tasks you do are always appropriate in meeting your needs.
  - Make sure that subject leaders in all departments concentrate on making sure that teaching and learning and helping you reach higher standards is their highest priority.
  - Make sure that all students behave well in all lessons and in all parts of the school.
- I know that you will want to support the staff in their efforts to improve in these areas.

Please accept our very best wishes for the future in all that you do.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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