

Biddick School Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108866
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	337170
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Lowery 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	1108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nick Robson
Headteacher	Mr Richard Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Biddick Lane Washington Tyne and Wear NE38 8AL
Telephone number	0191 219 3680
Fax number	0191 219 3688
Email address	biddick@sunderlandlearning.net

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons of between 20 and 30 minutes each on the main school and at the Harraton Skills Centre. They observed 31 teaching staff and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at documents including policies, development plans, minutes of meetings and safeguarding procedures. The responses from parents and carers on 151 questionnaires were considered together with replies from staff and students.

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

- the emphasis on raising achievement, especially in English and mathematics
- how effective the school has been in removing any inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the use of assessment information
- the extent to which boys and the most able are challenged
- the contribution made by the sports specialism to raising standards.

Information about the school

Biddick is a larger than average specialist sports college serving the community of Washington. Nearly all students come from a White British background and speak English as a first language. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is low. The school has recently moved into new premises, although a significant proportion of facilities are still under construction. The school is responsible for the Harraton Skills Centre which operates on a separate site offering vocational courses. The school has a number of awards including Investors in People, Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold and International School.

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

Biddick School provides its students with a satisfactory standard of education. It has a number of strengths; in particular, the breadth and quality of the curriculum, the opportunities offered through the sports specialism and the effectiveness of its care, guidance and support. Examination results have fluctuated since the last inspection but continue to be broadly in line with those achieved nationally. Weaknesses in the core subjects of English and mathematics are being addressed. Inspectors observed that students are now making good progress in their English lessons. Attainment is strongest in the vocational subjects.

Most students report they enjoy and feel safe in school. Attendance is above average. Students behave well around the site and in the majority of lessons. However, where teaching is less effective, some students become less engaged and the pace of learning slows. While teaching overall is satisfactory, there is insufficient use of information on students' prior attainment to plan lessons. Consequently, work is not always matched to individuals' needs and the most able do not always receive sufficient challenge.

Outstanding sporting provision is highly effective in encouraging students to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Regular participation in sport is high. One Year 11 girl commented, 'There is loads of choice for off-site activities,' another agreed saying, 'I've now tried rock climbing and snowboarding.' Considerable emphasis is placed on developing curricular opportunities at both Key Stages 3 and 4. A more thematic approach for younger students is assisting in strengthening their basic skills. Older students welcome the extensive range of academic and vocational programmes, in particular the Young Apprenticeships and the high-quality practical courses delivered at the off-site Harraton Skills Centre. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive good care and support coupled with effective assistance provided by external agencies. Year 11 students receive appropriate guidance in preparation for transition onto sixth form, college or employment. As a result, the proportion of leavers not in education, employment or training is extremely low.

The headteacher and senior staff have been effective in creating a vision for the school, one where all students will benefit from an extensive range of curricular opportunities. The drive to upgrade teaching facilities has resulted in the creation of a stimulating learning environment in the new school buildings and in the off-site vocational centre. The impact of this work is, however, diminished by an inconsistent approach to monitoring and evaluation. As a result, senior staff and governors do not always have a clear view of the quality of teaching, the use of assessment information and how increased curricular opportunities can lead to improving achievement. The school has developed extensive partnerships and is leading several significant local 14 to 19

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projects. The move to new buildings and modern accommodation, while providing an organisational challenge to leaders and teaching staff, is exciting students and presents an opportunity to improve engagement in their learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good or better teaching in order to raise levels of achievement by:
 - making more effective use of data to inform lesson planning, thus ensuring that work meets the needs of all students, in particular the most able
 - focusing marking on showing students how they can improve their work
 - ensuring that all lessons are well managed and challenging in order to better engage students in their learning
 - the regular monitoring of the quality of teaching.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels are involved in effective monitoring and evaluation by:
 - building systematic review systems into the school's development planning
 - ensuring that all middle leaders are trained to monitor and evaluate effectively.
- 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.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students' attainment in 2009 was broadly average. The attainment on vocational courses was stronger than that in the core subjects of English and mathematics. Overall, students make satisfactory progress. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who receive carefully targeted additional support, in particular with their literacy, are making good progress. The school recognises that the progress made by a few boys and the most able is variable, with success directly dependant on the quality of teaching they receive. Evidence gathered from observing lessons during the inspection confirms that achievement is strongest on practical courses at Key Stage 4, where students are developing effective communication, decision-making and organisational skills. Students' oral skills are strong. Recent improvements in literacy are being driven by more effective teaching in English and where students receive specifically targeted individual support.

Students behave well around the school, but in lessons where there is insufficient challenge a small minority of students do misbehave. Rates of fixed-term exclusion are low and continue to fall. The behaviour of the most challenging students is increasingly effectively managed. Students report they enjoy school, feel safe and particularly welcome the close-circuit television installed around the new building. Students' understanding of health-related issues is outstanding and this is underpinned by high

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levels of participation in regular physical exercise and the selection of healthy eating options in the canteen. Students are keen to take on responsibility and contribute to the school and wider community. They have played a significant role in contributing to the design of the new building, including an imaginative use of the Dragon's Den approach to generate ideas from students. Strong links with local business and sporting organisations are enabling students to develop a good understanding of the world of work and, consequently, enhancing their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In the most effective lessons teaching has pace and challenge, enthusing and enabling students to make good progress. Staff have worked hard to settle into their new accommodation and are making increasingly effective use of the enhanced technology to motivate students and improve learning. In a minority of lessons teaching is less effective. Here, too many students are passive learners, work is insufficiently tailored to meet their needs, tasks lack challenge and some students become bored, as a result, making slower progress in their learning. Good interventions from teaching assistants

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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help students with a statement of special educational needs to improve their communication skills and give them confidence to strengthen their ability to learn independently. The quality of marking is inconsistent; frequently, it simply confirms that students have completed work. Where it is most effective, in the vocational subjects, it gives students a clear understanding of how to improve their work and secure more rapid progress.

Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in strengthening the curriculum. A thematic approach at Key Stage 3 is assisting students to improve their skills of enquiry and their interest in their learning. At Key Stage 4 a wide range of courses enable students to choose a programme which meets their aptitudes and interests. The vocational courses, including the BTEC in Performing Arts and Dance, enthuse students, secure high pass rates and develop professional skills. The off-site centre successfully gives students from the school and across Sunderland access to skills-based training, with good progression onto further training and employment.

The school is committed to ensuring that every student is valued and cared for as an individual. One parent wrote to inspectors complementing the headteacher and his staff for their dedication in caring for her children'. Effective support for transition enables students to move successfully both into and on from the school. An online computer program supports Year 9 students to select their Key Stage 4 courses. A 'virtual school' learning platform successfully allows students absent from classes to continue their studies. An extensive range of approaches are used to support and guide students. However, there is inadequate monitoring and evaluation of these initiatives, which limits their further development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has been effective in encouraging external partnerships and securing additional resources in order to develop the curriculum and facilities. Considerable effort has been put into ensuring a smooth transition into the new buildings. However, this has deflected attention away from the critical task of securing consistently good teaching and raising attainment. Leaders have sought and applied a broad range of initiatives in pursuit of increasing educational opportunities. However, systems to monitor and then evaluate their impact are not routinely built into planning. The monitoring of lessons is inconsistent and, as a result, some teachers are unclear about what constitutes good

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teaching and learning. A significant proportion of middle leaders lack the skills to evaluate their curriculum areas effectively. As a result, there are considerable variations in the effectiveness of leadership across subject areas.

There is a commitment to equalities and enhancing community cohesion. The school has successfully narrowed any gaps in attainment and participation; the school operates smoothly as a largely cohesive community. Students have a good appreciation of different cultures as a result of curricular initiatives, including the multicultural week. However, insufficient attention is given to the planning, monitoring and reporting of this work. Effective systems for safeguarding students are in place, including procedures for safer recruitment and the assessment of risk. Staff have a good understanding of the importance of child protection. The governing body is supportive and governors have played a key role in developing the curriculum and facilities. They provide challenge but place insufficient focus on ensuring that systems are in place for systematic evaluation of the school's work.

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	3
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	3
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	3

Views of parents and carers

Although the number of questionnaires returned by parents and carers during the inspection was relatively small, the vast majority who responded are happy with their children's education. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about how the school helps their children to adopt a healthy lifestyle and the extent to which the school takes account of their views. The inspection team investigated these concerns carefully. Inspectors found that participation rates in physical activity and the selection of healthy

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meals are high; these make a strong contribution to securing healthy lifestyles. Inspectors identified that opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in key decision making are limited. However, the school recognises this point and is seeking to increase parents' and carers' engagement, including through the parents' and carers' forums.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Biddick School Sports College 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 151 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,108 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	31	87	58	13	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	29	98	65	8	5	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	29	96	64	10	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	32	83	55	13	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	38	25	97	64	9	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	21	99	66	16	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	22	94	62	19	13	2	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)	44	29	97	64	4	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	27	91	60	11	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	18	99	66	13	9	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	17	99	66	18	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	37	84	56	5	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	36	84	56	10	7	1	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



13 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Biddick School Sports College, Washington, NE38 8AL

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and taking the time to show us your work and talk to us during our recent inspection. We judged your school to be providing you with a satisfactory education. You told us through your questionnaires and in discussions how you feel safe in school and welcome the support and care received from staff. Older students appreciate the range of options available and in particular the practical vocational courses. Your sports college status offers you tremendous opportunities to undertake good-quality specialist courses, join in a broad range of after-school clubs and thus help you adopt a healthy lifestyle. Your attendance is good. You behave well around school, but a small minority do occasionally disrupt classes, particularly when they are not motivated by the lessons and not engaged in their learning. Overall, you are making satisfactory progress in your studies.

Your headteacher agrees with us that there are a number of areas that need to continue to improve, including:

- increasing the proportion of good and better teaching and providing you with more challenging activities and guidance on how you can improve your work
- improving how the school monitors what it does and evaluates how it can be even better.

You have an important role in helping to develop your school and take advantage of the opportunities offered in the new building. It is important you all seek to cooperate with your teachers and work hard in all your lessons.

Best wishes to you for your future and good luck with your studies.

Yours sincerely

Paul Lowery

Her Majesty's Inspector

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