

Beauchamps High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115322
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338565
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Abbott HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1337
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maggie Beauchamp
Headteacher	Mr Robert Hodges
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They observed the school's work and looked at: pupil progress data; a range of policies and minutes of meetings; school self-evaluation documents; risk assessments; financial information; and the single central record of safeguarding checks on staff. The inspection team analysed questionnaires that were returned by 362 parents and carers, 142 students and 40 members of staff.

Between them, inspectors were in the school for 93 hours. About half of this was outside lesson time. Inspectors devoted a total of 22 hours to observing 48 lessons involving 47 of the 90 teachers in the school. They therefore spent just under half of the available lesson time, or nearly a quarter of the total time, in observing teaching and learning. Approximately 30% of their time was spent in meetings with staff, governors and pupils. The remaining time was spent in reading documents, analysing data, recording evidence and agreeing their judgements.

- The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:
- whether school performance data presents a misleading picture of the balance between learning and progress in GCSE subjects, applied learning courses and post-16 courses
- why recent AS pass rates were low
- the extent to which the school's self-evaluation has correctly identified the school's outstanding features
- how well leaders and managers are improving the sixth form.

Information about the school

Beauchamps High School is a specialist business and enterprise school with a second specialism in applied learning. A large majority of its students live locally in Wickford, with most of the remainder travelling from Basildon. A very large proportion are of White British origin and very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has a small, but growing sixth form.

The school holds a number of awards, including Investors in People, Chartermark, the Inclusion Quality Mark, the International Schools Award, the Bronze Eco Award and the Four Star Award from Young Essex Assembly, Green Pledge. It has Financial Management in Schools accreditation and is currently being assessed for the Healthy Schools Award.

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

Beauchamps High School is a good school. The education it provides is outstanding for students in the main school (Years 7 to 11) and satisfactory for those in the sixth form. From a below-average starting point in Year 7, students make very good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards at age 16 have risen steadily since the last inspection and remain high, particularly in applied learning courses, which include science and information and communication technology (ICT). In contrast, attainment is variable in the sixth form, partly because the sixth form curriculum is not fully aligned with that in the main school. However, achievement is good overall.

The school's dual specialist status has had an excellent impact across the school and is a major factor in the school's outstanding promotion of community cohesion. For example, the school's web portal allows primary schools access to the enterprise curriculum. The school works exceptionally hard to engage with parents and carers through its focus groups, information and advice evenings, newsletters, emails and its well designed web portal. Parents are engaged in learning through adult education classes and family learning that the school provides at no charge.

The curriculum has been extended and improved through partnerships with other education providers and with businesses, including a car manufacturer, a shopping centre management company and a hospice. In Key Stages 3 and 4, the curriculum is broad and balanced and provides excellent opportunities for high quality learning. This is reflected in the outstanding progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition, students learn to apply their skills in literacy, numeracy, enterprise and ICT very well, giving them an extremely good grounding for their future working lives.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall, but the school is keen to establish good teaching for all. Inspectors agree with senior staff that weaknesses in assessment are the main reason why teaching in a minority of lessons is satisfactory rather than good. For example, in a few cases, students' books are not marked regularly enough by the teacher to provide students with useful feedback on their work.

Support for students with special educational needs is very effective and the pastoral teams provide good care and guidance. There is a strong programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). As a result, students' personal development is good in all respects and outstanding in some. For example, a very large majority of students say they feel safe in school and most parents and carers agree. Students' involvement with the local community is substantial. Many take on responsibilities in the school. For example, several student council members who have been elected as associate

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governors attend governing body meetings and sub-committees. Students contribute well to decisions relating to school life. For example, the views of older girls have helped shape the provision of physical education in Key Stage 4.

Senior leaders have a clear vision for the main school, setting themselves challenging targets and working very hard to achieve them. Their self-evaluation is realistic, based on a rigorous systems of target setting and monitoring at whole school, subject, group and individual student levels. This approach has been very effective in Key Stages 3 and 4 and has helped to maintain high standards and to improve progress in the core subjects of mathematics and English. In these respects, senior leaders have demonstrated a very good capacity for further improvement.

However, until recently, the same level of leadership has not been apparent at sixth form level. For example, while a downturn in AS results was expected in 2009, senior leaders did not anticipate the depth of underperformance. To their credit, they have responded quickly, tightening up their tracking of sixth-formers' learning. Each head of subject meets now regularly with a senior leader to discuss ways of driving through improvement in the sixth form. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this greater level of support and accountability and, for now, students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form.

There are two main reasons why the sixth form is not as strong as the rest of the school. One is that the sixth form does not have a clearly articulated sense of purpose. The other is that the sixth form curriculum is not well matched to the needs of all those who may wish to continue their studies in the school. The profile of students' attainment at age 16 is one of broadly average performance in GCSE subjects, boosted by very strong results in applied learning qualifications. Until recently, the sixth form has offered only AS and A level courses, which have not suited all students' preferred learning styles.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes in the sixth form over the next two years by:
 - setting out a clear vision for the sixth form
 - ensuring that the sixth form curriculum meets the needs of all students who may wish to continue their studies in the school
 - extending to the sixth form the high quality of leadership and management that is evident in the rest of the school.
- Further improve teaching and learning by improving the consistency with which assessment is used to maximise the progress of each student.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement is outstanding in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Students make good progress to attain average results in traditional GCSE subjects. This is boosted by very successful applied learning courses, resulting in high overall

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attainment at Key Stage 4. As a result, most students gain the equivalent of five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics for the majority.

Students make good progress in lessons because the great majority of teaching is good. They learn skills that will hold them in good stead in later life, such as working with others, problem solving and explaining their points of view. Their behaviour and attitudes in lessons contribute to their learning. Most students behave well around school and get on with each other, with few examples of inconsiderate behaviour. Students understand dangers outside school and on the internet.

Students understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and many participate in health-related activities in and out of school. For example, several dozen students competed in a National Health Vitality Group project, and two successful teams went on to make anti-smoking DVDs. While many take advantage of the healthy food options in the school canteen, a significant number continue to choose less healthy snacks such as crisps rather than fruit. A minority of students responding to the questionnaire feel that the school does not do enough to support them to have healthy lifestyles.

Students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through the curriculum and linked well to the school's outstanding promotion of community cohesion. Students' understanding of the United Kingdom's diverse range of cultures is enhanced through a link with a school in Halifax.

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	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
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
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	2

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 of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good in a large majority of lessons. In these cases, teachers display very good subject expertise and convey ideas with clarity. They have high expectations and monitor students' work closely, using skilful questioning to probe and extend their understanding. Their lessons are usually well adapted to students' different needs. They include structured opportunities for independent work and a variety of stimulating activities that capture students' interest and keep them well motivated. In the minority of less successful lessons, students are given a more passive role, either listening or completing relatively unchallenging tasks so the more-able students are not stretched as much as they might be. Occasionally, the pace of learning drops as teachers miss opportunities to deepen understanding.

In the majority of cases where assessment is effective, students' understanding of how to improve is good. For example, some very good examples of diagnostic feedback to students were seen in lessons in English, history, mathematics and psychology.

The curriculum is modified to meet the needs of individuals and groups. The specialist subjects of business and enterprise, ICT and mathematics provide a strong platform for students' excellent preparation for future economic well-being. Work-related learning includes business links, including outside speakers, a range of visits and specific themed days. The second specialism extends the opportunities to students through partnerships with other providers and local businesses. For example, students are gaining applied learning qualifications in areas as diverse as fish husbandry, retail trades, hair and beauty, travel and tourism and sport.

All aspects of the curriculum contribute extremely well to the outcomes for students, with a strong contribution from PSHE, citizenship and religious education. Long-, medium- and short-term planning builds very well upon students' prior experience and looks ahead.

Good transition arrangements from primary school to Year 7 ensure that students settle in quickly. There is effective guidance for students at age 14 and 16 to enable them to make informed choices about their next steps. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and students are confident they are well supported and know who to talk to if they have problems. Strategies to promote good attendance are based on regular monitoring of data and prompt intervention.

The school uses a system of restorative justice to address inappropriate behaviour and this policy has had a satisfactory impact. Nevertheless, a small minority of parents, students and staff feel that behaviour is not always well managed in the classroom. Senior leaders are introducing a variety of initiatives to tackle this issue. They are striking an appropriate balance between supporting the small number of teachers concerned and encouraging them to be more consistent in their use of rewards and sanctions.

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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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has a detailed strategic plan which identifies clear priorities and well-thought-out approaches to bring about the intended improvements. Responsibilities are clearly designated and each part of the plan has a clear budget and timeline. Progress against success criteria and targets is regularly reviewed by senior staff and governors. Evaluation of the impact of specialist status is thorough. The school's newsletter is of high quality and contains a plethora of evidence that illustrates the excellent impact of its specialisms. Financial management is sound and the school provides good value for money.

Senior leaders have a very good understanding of the school's context and their promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. Planning involves all departments and takes account of the views of parents, students and other stakeholders. The community aspects of the school's specialist status are particularly impressive. The school has also involved stakeholders in developing effective equality schemes to tackle discrimination and it has good arrangements to review their impact. Governors and senior leaders monitor the outcomes for different groups to ensure that all achieve as well as possible. Governors hold the school to account well and ensure that it meets its statutory duties. Leaders and managers adopt clear and pragmatic approaches to improving teaching and learning in the main school. The progress of each student is monitored carefully to identify those who need academic support. Teaching is evaluated rigorously and accurately and areas of weakness are analysed carefully to determine the best way to tackle them. When changes are introduced, they are supported with well-planned training and follow-up monitoring. For example, the school already has plans to improve teaching and learning further by improving the consistency of assessment across the school.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are clear, practical and well understood. There are close links with external care agencies and the school reports that the support it receives from social services has improved markedly.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students' overall attainment at A level is average, though the proportion gaining high grades is below average. This represents satisfactory progress based on their average attainment in GCSE subjects at Key Stage 4. Recent results in AS examinations have been well below average, with several students choosing to repeat Year 12 and others dropping out. Of those continuing to Year 13, most are on track to meet their targets.

The majority of sixth form lessons seen during the inspection were well structured, with students being questioned closely and assessed effectively to help them develop their understanding. However, the pace of learning was slower in some subjects, notably in the sciences, so learning and progress in lessons was satisfactory overall.

Sixth form leaders organise provision and manage resources satisfactorily and ensure that the sixth form provides a safe learning environment. Pastoral support for students is good and academic monitoring is satisfactory. Students receive good information and advice to guide their next steps into higher education or employment. Their personal development is good. However, some students' attendance in the sixth form is irregular.

Monitoring, evaluation and planning for the sixth form are satisfactory. Leaders know where the strengths and weaknesses lie because they observe lessons and analyse results. However, improvement planning for the sixth form is weaker than for the main school and, until recently, leaders had not taken concerted action to drive forward improvement. However, they have responded to the low success rates in Year 12 by raising its admissions requirements on AS level courses and by introducing more applied learning courses that build on students' experiences from Key Stage 4. The sixth form curriculum is now satisfactory and makes effective use of external partnerships.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's experience at the school. Nevertheless, a few parents have concerns. The most common concern is that the school does not do enough to support students to have a healthy lifestyle. Several parents feel that the short lunchtime is unhelpful and that too many students bring crisps or buy cakes rather than healthy snacks. Inspectors agree that this is the weakest aspect of the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles. A small minority of parents are concerned that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with strongly enough. This concern is shared by a minority of staff. Inspectors noted some boisterousness at break times, but saw students behaving well in the great majority of lessons.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beauchamps 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 362 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1337 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	93	26	235	65	28	8	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	102	28	238	66	14	4	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	127	35	205	57	24	7	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	115	32	208	57	27	7	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	76	21	239	66	39	11	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	20	228	63	50	14	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	17	217	60	64	18	7	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)	67	19	230	64	25	7	5	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	82	23	242	67	25	7	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	80	22	200	55	51	14	15	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	14	226	62	45	12	9	2
The school is led and managed effectively	78	22	231	64	32	9	10	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	112	31	218	60	24	7	4	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.



12 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Beauchamps High School, Wickford, SS11 8LY

I am writing to you to tell you about your school's recent inspection. I would like to thank you on behalf of the team for the help you gave us during the inspection. We talked to several groups of you. You told us that you enjoy school and feel very safe. You told us that there is always someone you can talk to in school if you have a problem. We also surveyed 142 students, including 17 sixth formers. A minority of these students feel that behaviour is not well managed. However, we judged behaviour to be good, particularly in well-taught lessons. A few students want the school to do more to promote healthy lifestyles. However, some of you could help by taking more responsibility for eating healthy snacks. We were particularly impressed with the outstanding way that many of you contribute to the community.

Beauchamps High School has several outstanding features and makes excellent use of its specialist status to promote community cohesion. However, it is judged good overall because the sixth form is not as strong as the rest of the school. The school is well led and has improved in several respects since it was last inspected. The curriculum has been enriched with a range of applied learning courses. You are given an outstanding preparation for your future working lives. Examination results at age 16 have continued to improve and you make very good progress in your learning.

The great majority of lessons are well taught. You usually know how well you are doing and how to get better because teachers give you good feedback. We agree with senior staff that improving assessment is the key to improving teaching and learning still further. We have also recommended that the school should improve outcomes in the sixth form by extending the systems that have worked in the main school. We found that the school needs to decide what sort of sixth form it wants and to make sure that the curriculum meets the needs of all students who may wish to continue their studies in the school.

Thank you again. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott

Her Majesty's Inspector

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