

The Boswells School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 115332 |
| Local Authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 338567 |
| Inspection dates | 3–4 March 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | David Jones HMI |

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

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|--|---------------------------------------|
| 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 | 1481 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 241 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Ruth Bird |
| Headteacher | Mr David John Crowe |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 December 2006 |
| School address | Burnham Road Chelmsford CM1 6LY |
| Telephone number | 01245 264451 |
| Fax number | 01245 350142 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 60 lessons, four tutorial sessions and an assembly, observing 60 teachers. Learning support staff were observed in a range of contexts. Inspectors spent 77.7% of the time available, a total of 35 hours, observing learning in all its forms. They held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the minutes of governing body meetings, the school improvement plan and details of the school's partnership work. They scrutinised the students' work, the school's records, the 413 parental questionnaires and the 187 responses to the student and staff questionnaires.

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

- The school's examinations results at all levels.
- The quality of learning and progress in the classroom.
- The impact of the school's partnership working and professional development programme on the quality of teaching.
- The rising trend in attendance.
- The school's safeguarding procedures.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average and draws students from north east Chelmsford. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national figure, as is the proportion of those whose first language is not English. The proportion of girls and boys in different year groups has varied in recent years.

The proportion of students registered by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is half the national figure and the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. There are a small number of children who are looked after by the local authority in the school.

The school has been granted performing arts specialist status and has received the following national accreditations: International School, General Teaching Council Teacher Learning Academy, Partnership Promotion School, Healthy School Award, and the ArtsMark (Gold).

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****1**

Main findings

This is a good school with many outstanding features. Outcomes for individuals and groups are good and standards are often significantly above average and students make good progress. Equality of opportunity is good; the small numbers of students from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds do as well or better than their peers. Those students with special educational needs generally make good progress. The school's performing arts specialist status has a very high reputation locally and the school consistently meets challenging targets in this area.

Overall, teaching and learning are good; there are no significant inadequacies in particular subjects or across year groups. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are good and this with the professional development opportunities provided for staff, is a real strength of the work of the school. The most effective teaching secures high level responses from students in vibrant, engaging lessons; for example, in an outstanding Year 9 science lesson, a particularly well managed practical lesson provided the basis of GCSE level challenge on the balancing of chemical equations. The school is working hard to develop this style of teaching so that lessons fully engage students in their own learning and have identified the need to review lesson planning to reflect such challenges.

The range of curriculum opportunities provided is good, although the use of vocational qualifications to enhance academic outcomes and the transition to post 16 courses are not fully developed. The range of the out of school hours provision is extensive with a high take up by students.

The pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community, for example, through the efforts of Junior Sports Leaders who run activities for local primary schools. As a result of the effectiveness of the school's mentoring and guidance systems the students rate of attendance is high and has been on a three year rising trend, the most recent figures are well above the national average. Behaviour is good overall and break time socialisation is calm. Students from a wide range of backgrounds develop as confident, articulate and tolerant young people as they move through the school. The care, welfare and guidance provided are outstanding; parents and students spoke positively about the nature of the individual support available and students spoke of 'staff going out of their way to help you'. Effective academic guidance based on good assessment for learning has helped to raise standards.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in embedding ambition and driving forward improvement is good; they have collectively created a vibrant learning community. Self-evaluation is critically realistic and senior staff are quick to observe that

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they gain as much from the school's outstanding partnership work as they give in support of others. All of the staff responses to the inspection questionnaire noted that they felt proud to be a member of staff. Governance is good; the minutes of the governing body meetings provide clear evidence of effective support and challenge for senior staff and of a governing body with a clear focus.

The leadership team has done very well to maintain and in some instances enhance standards at age 16, to continually develop teaching and learning, and to ensure outstanding provision in most of the 'Every Child Matters' contexts, through systematic monitoring and highly accurate self evaluation. The school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the range of vocational qualifications for students in Key Stage 3 and 4 in order to:
 - facilitate transition and progression of learning through Key Stages 4 & 5
 - further enhance standards and achievement.
- Review the lesson planning structure so that all lessons engage students in their own learning and provide a range of tasks well matched to their learning needs.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment on entry is close to the national average; however, standards at the end of Year 11 have been significantly above the national figures for the past three years. The proportion of students obtaining five higher grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is significantly above the national average, as is the proportion of students obtaining five higher grades in any subject at GCSE. The examination results secured by the girls have been noticeably stronger than those obtained by the boys for the past two years. The performance of the limited number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds has been in line with that of their White British peers.

Results in mathematics have been strong for three years and those for English have reached comparable levels, with over 80% of students making the expected progress in these subjects between Key Stages 2 to 4. The results secured in the school's performing arts specialist area consistently meet their targets.

The students' current learning and performance in the classroom mirror the improvements established in the most recent examination results. In the large majority of lessons, students make good progress. Lesson outcomes are strongest where there is a clear focus on what the students are expected to learn and where there is a sharp focus on student centred learning.

Enjoyment and achievement are good overall, with strengths evident in individual achievement, attendance, standards in mathematics and English, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and the students' contribution to the school and wider community. Inspectors found students and parents to be very positive on students 'feeling safe' and

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observed very good procedures to support this view. Although a small number of parents expressed concerns regarding bullying, students say there is little and they know who to approach for action; they are confident that any issues are dealt with promptly and effectively.

A good range of healthy school meals are popular with students and the proportion of students engaged in sport is high; the school has recently received the 'Healthy School' award. The range of workplace and other skills the students develop towards their future economic well-being are good. The proportion of students who leave school to secure places in employment, further education and/or training is well above average and the number of students seeking places in the effective sixth form is rising. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with a very strong moral and social dimension.

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 | 2 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 2 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 with the large majority of lessons found to be good or better; outstanding practice was seen across a range of subjects. In the best lessons, teachers

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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constantly challenge students to explain or extend their learning. They use well-targeted questions and a range of activities which interest and engage students, including the use of computers and interactive whiteboards. Students respond particularly well when they are encouraged to solve problems or learn by doing. Less effective lessons were characterised by extended periods of the teacher talking to the class which resulted in students becoming passive learners. Teachers often show very good subject knowledge; however, where lessons were judged to provide only satisfactory learning opportunities, it was because planning did not always bring together student centred activities with a strong match to the variety of student learning needs. Teaching assistants often provide effective support in lessons so that students with special educational needs learn as effectively as their peers. Students know their targets and teachers often refer to the skills required to achieve particular levels. Marking and assessment for learning overall is good although some variations exist.

Good curriculum provision supports the interests of students of all abilities. However, more could be done to facilitate the progression of learning between Years 10 and 13. The school is considering the introduction of a range of vocational courses that can enhance the students learning skills and raise standards further. The broad range of enrichment activities is especially good and student engagement is high. Community cohesion is outstanding and the school has been awarded both the Partnership School and the International Schools Award because of its work in supporting other establishments. Specialist school status has had a positive impact on the curriculum provision, the quality of teaching and learning and the progress made by students in across a range of subjects.

All aspects of care, guidance and support are excellent. Regular analysis of student performance and the work of effective pastoral managers play a key role in supporting students' emotional health and well being. The work related learning coordinator and a 'Connexions' base in school provide excellent advice. Weekly 'Safeguarding and Emotional Well Being' meetings ensure that any vulnerable students are monitored closely. The school has excellent links with external agencies and professional counsellors are made available to students four mornings per week. Students say they have high levels of confidence in the school's advice and there are highly effective induction and transition programmes for them. The parents are positive about the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance provided.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have embedded ambition well and are driving improvement through an effective approach to dispersing leadership responsibilities across the school. There has been a consistent focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment. The headteacher has clear expectations of the effective classroom practice required; the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by senior staff is accurate. As a result, standards have been maintained and improved so that students make good progress towards challenging targets. Safeguarding is good and fully meets requirements. The school has managed the transition of responsibilities between new senior appointments well. The school's excellent care, guidance and support lies at the heart of outstanding engagement with parents.

Governance is good with a clear focus on school improvement and effective management of limited resources. Effective leadership has ensured that the quality of care, guidance and support has been a key factor in the high levels of student attendance and parents commented appreciatively on the work of middle leaders in this context. Over 90% of parents felt the school was led and managed effectively.

Outstanding partnerships working with a wide range of other education providers, locally and across the county, as well as with community groups are a strength of the school's outstanding community cohesion work; this charitable support has a global dimension. Senior staff and governors deploy resources effectively and 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 | 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 |

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Sixth form

Good leadership has ensured that this is an effective and growing sixth form that is increasingly popular with students from other schools. Most enter from a starting point of broadly average attainment and students reach standards that are in line with the national average by the end of the sixth form. The sixth form offers a wide choice of advanced level courses as well as some vocational qualifications. Retention rates are high. Care, guidance and support in the sixth form are good. Students' personal development is good and they have opportunities to volunteer in the local primary schools. There are excellent relationships between staff and students. The sixth form provides a good transition from school life to work or further and higher education because of the independent learning and personal development it encourages in students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the sixth form | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form | 2 |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parental responses were positive. More than 90% of parents agreed that the school doing well against 11 of the 13 questions. Student responses were equally positive. About 15% of questionnaires returned express some concerns regarding behaviour but inspectors found no evidence to support these views. Similarly, some parents noted their suggestions and concerns were not accepted but the large majority were happy with this aspect of the school's work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Boswells 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 413 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1481 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 130 | 31 | 253 | 61 | 20 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 123 | 30 | 276 | 67 | 10 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 119 | 29 | 263 | 64 | 27 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 118 | 29 | 266 | 64 | 22 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 96 | 23 | 283 | 69 | 28 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 76 | 18 | 283 | 69 | 45 | 11 | 1 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 77 | 19 | 286 | 69 | 39 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| 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) | 101 | 24 | 249 | 60 | 26 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 112 | 27 | 273 | 66 | 24 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 96 | 23 | 237 | 57 | 51 | 12 | 12 | 3 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 60 | 15 | 264 | 64 | 59 | 14 | 6 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 139 | 34 | 238 | 58 | 25 | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 153 | 37 | 234 | 57 | 19 | 5 | 3 | 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

| | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| Type of school | 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 March 2010

Dear Students,

Inspection of The Boswells School, Chelmsford, CM1 6LY

As you know, your school was inspected recently and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. Firstly, I would like to thank you for your openness, friendliness and courtesy during our visit. The inspectors enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. The Boswells is a friendly place where staff know you very well and almost all of you noted in the pupil questionnaire how staff care for and support you. Inspectors judged this care, guidance and support to be outstanding and we were also impressed by your good behaviour. I am very pleased to say that your rate of attendance is well above the average for secondary schools and this is having a positive effect on standards and achievement. Well done!

The inspectors found that teaching and learning are consistently good and we agree with you that the lessons where you are involved in your own learning are impressive. We believe that the range of curriculum opportunities provided is good, although, there is room for a greater range of skill based learning opportunities to further improve your academic progress.

I have asked the headteacher and the governors to:

Introduce new vocational qualifications to help you make even greater progress.

Review the lesson planning structure so that all lessons provide a range of tasks that involve you in your own learning.

I look forward to hearing of your future success.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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