Bishop Fox's Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123863
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340446
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Karl Sampson

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	917
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Alderman
Headteacher	Mr Paul Scutt
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2010
School address	Bishop Fox Drive Taunton TA1 3HQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 27 teachers and 29 lessons, and saw parts of 14 other lessons and activities. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, governors and groups of students. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and students' work. They also scrutinised 120 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by staff and a sample of students from each year group.

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

- the consistency in the quality of teaching to ensure high levels of progress for all students, in particular for higher-attaining students, girls and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of the curriculum and care, guidance and support in promoting outstanding outcomes for all students
- the contribution to school improvement of partnerships and the business and enterprise specialism
- the impact on student outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation carried out by senior and middle leaders.

Information about the school

Bishop Fox's Community School is smaller than average and serves the town of Taunton and its surrounding area. The school has held business and enterprise specialist status since 2003. Most students are of White British heritage and the vast majority speak English as their first language. The percentage of students known to be entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below average. Their needs include specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and social, emotional and behavioural issues. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is half the national average. There is a designated resource base in the school for students with hearing impairment.

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

Bishop Fox's is a good school and its commitment to sustained improvement has enabled it to move at a good pace since the last inspection. In this outstandingly caring and supportive environment, students are nurtured as individuals, enjoy their learning and achieve well. Under the leadership of a dynamic headteacher, the strong senior leadership team have demonstrated the drive, determination and passion required of leaders and managers in a successful school. Although some initiatives are still relatively new, others are firmly embedded in practice, most importantly, the systems for tracking students' progress and devising effective programmes of intervention to address any potential underachievement. As a result, the school is able to show a rising trend in attainment and outcomes and all students make good progress, regardless of their background, starting points or special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is in a good position to continue this improvement because:

- it is led well by a headteacher who has a clear vision for its future
- effective action has been taken to strengthen leadership and management at departmental level and hold staff more firmly to account
- school development planning and successful interventions to support learning are based firmly on the findings of accurate self-evaluation
- there is a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration among staff and a commitment to raising attainment and improving achievement for all.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is improving because of sharper and more rigorous monitoring by senior staff, with a clear focus on improving classroom practice. Expectations of students' capabilities have been raised through more stringent use of assessment data to set challenging targets and inform teachers' planning, so that tasks are more closely tailored to students' individual needs. The best lessons are characterised by innovative and challenging learning experiences that ensure high levels of student participation and engage students as co-constructors in the learning process. Teachers use effective questioning to gauge students' understanding and, where necessary, re-shape explanations and offer high-quality verbal and written guidance about steps for improvement. However, these skills are not yet shared by all teachers across the school. School leaders recognise that monitoring and evaluation are not yet sufficiently refined to ensure that the very best practice is seen across all curriculum areas.

☐ Students say they feel exceptionally safe in school and the outstanding systems to support their welfare have an extremely positive effect on their personal development. Students make an extensive contribution to the life of the school and the wider community, thanks to the quality of the curriculum, the outstanding range of

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partnerships and the excellent opportunities arising from the school's specialist status. Behaviour is good in and around the school; students are polite and courteous to each other and staff and say that they enjoy their time at the school. This is illustrated by the significant improvement in attendance, which is now high.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by ensuring that:
  - systems for monitoring and supporting teaching and learning result in the very best practice being seen more consistently across the curriculum
  - teachers use assessment data consistently well when planning lessons so that work matches the needs of individual students and provides high levels of challenge for all
  - teachers develop their use of probing questions in lessons to stimulate students' active participation and provide greater opportunity for students to develop and explain their ideas fully
  - day-to-day assessment is used consistently well across all subjects so that all students understand precisely what subject-specific actions they must take to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning Taking into account:	**2**
Pupils' attainment[1]	3
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	**2**
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	**1**

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

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	**2**
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance[1]	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	**2**

How effective is the provision?

- The way in which the school cares for and supports students is outstanding. Everyone is known as an individual and the excellent links to external agencies complement a coherent, integrated approach to ensure the well-being of all students, especially those most in need of support
- The flexible learning centre does an excellent job in supporting students who find learning a struggle, including the increasing number of disaffected students who join the school as a result of mid-year moves from other schools within the local authority. It is a valuable aspect of provision in supporting achievement and ensuring that students continue coming to school, even when they find being in lessons difficult.
- Individual support and provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the small number of hearing-impaired students are strong, thanks to the range and quality of personalised programmes available. For example, the programme to support reading recovery is particularly successful as a result of the high-quality, one-to-one withdrawal work
- The school has developed a comprehensive and detailed system to set targets for students and to track their progress. The resulting information is used well to identify students who could achieve more, but not all teachers make full use of this information when they plan their lessons
- The curriculum is developing well and provides an appropriate level of flexibility to meet the needs of individuals. Although not yet fully embedded, there are a number of emerging strengths in the development, planning and evaluation of the curriculum to raise students' aspirations, enjoyment and achievement.
- The school's specialist status has been used effectively to support the recent development of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, with the introduction of an enterprise skills programme for Year 9 students.
- At Key Stage 4, specialist status and the school's partnership work with business and other local providers have improved the breadth and balance of academic, vocational and applied learning opportunities available for students. This improvement has enabled a much greater degree of personalisation for students when selecting courses.
- The range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities on offer is good. These activities are well attended by all groups of students and give support to aspects of their academic and personal development.
- The large majority of lessons observed were good or better. The best lessons are carefully planned to meet the differing needs of students, move along briskly and

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provide frequent and high-quality opportunities for students to participate and drive learning forward. These lessons were underpinned by teachers' relaxed, yet highly professional relationships with classes.

- Less effective lessons, where progress is satisfactory rather than good, typically, have the following characteristics:
- a tendency for teachers to talk for too long, with the result that students spend too much time listening passively
- learning activities that are slow paced, not challenging, or do not match the needs of all students
- questioning that rarely delves deep in order to check students' understanding or that fails to create opportunities for students to generate and explore ideas of their own.
- Marking and assessment vary in quality. They are at their best in design and technology, English, and geography, where teachers provide precise subject-specific guidance that clearly identifies what students need to do to improve their work. For example, an outstanding geography lesson engaged students in a dialogue about assessment and empowered students to articulate the key features required to improve their verbal and written responses. However, in many cases, guidance simply confirms whether students have completed work, corrects what they have written, or provides general comments.

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**

How effective are leadership and management?

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	**2** 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	**2**
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	**1**

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	**2**
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	**1**
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	**2**
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	**2**

Views of parents and carers

Of the parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, the large majority responded positively to every statement. They believe that the school is well led and are particularly appreciative of the school's arrangements to meet their children's particular needs, keep them safe and enable them to enjoy school. A few of the parents and carers who responded raised concerns about behaviour in some lessons, as well as the school's effectiveness in communicating information, and how well it responds to suggestions or concerns. The inspection team judged that behaviour was good in and around the school, thanks to the quality of provision and procedures that are in place. Inspectors appreciate that any lapse in communication is a concern for those involved but consider that the school works hard to communicate with parents and carers and act upon their views. The school recognises that it must persist in finding effective ways of communicating with some families, particularly those who are unable to come into school, or do not have access to the internet.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	38	62	52	9	8	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	53	44	63	53	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	47	60	50	2	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	45	56	47	5	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	41	34	72	60	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	31	71	59	8	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	16	85	71	8	7	2	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)	43	36	68	57	6	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	35	68	57	6	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	30	57	48	13	11	5	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	20	78	65	12	10	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	53	44	62	52	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	44	62	52	2	2	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 oustanding 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:	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. ■ 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.

2 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishop Fox's Community School, Taunton TA1 3HQ

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and learning about the work of your school, which we have judged to be good. It has worked really hard since the last inspection to improve your achievement. Your headteacher leads the school well and is ably supported by other staff and the governors. They are all determined that you should have the opportunity to succeed and their work enables you to achieve good outcomes. You told us how much you appreciated the work of your teachers.

You enjoy coming to school, are extremely well cared for, have a good range of curricular opportunities and are well taught. You, particularly, appreciate the positive benefits that business and enterprise status has brought in helping you to prepare for life beyond school and developing your enterprise skills. You told us you feel very safe and we think your behaviour in and around the school is good. You are polite, friendly and make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and the wider community.

The school's leaders are working to monitor and improve the consistency of lesson quality and are aware that your lessons don't always challenge you or help you to progress as quickly as you could. In order to improve the school further, we have asked them to focus on improving teaching, so that it is more consistently good or outstanding. We have asked that teachers share their best ideas and learn from each other, so that lessons, consistently, provide you with challenging learning activities which engage you more actively in learning and allow you to explain your ideas and contribute more. We have also asked that teachers, consistently, give you high-quality feedback on your work, so that you always know exactly what you need to do to improve in each subject. You can certainly help your teachers with some of these things.

Very best wishes for your future happiness and success.

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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