

Blenheim High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131386
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	341136
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Samantha Morgan-Price HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1381
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Douglas Croucher
Headteacher	Ms Teresa Leech
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Two thirds of time was spent looking at learning; the number of teachers seen was 38. Meetings were held with groups of students, the vice-chair of governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's strategic plan, development plans, self-evaluation, records of lesson observations, achievement and attainment data, records of vulnerable students, and governing body sub-committee minutes. The team scrutinised 596 parental questionnaires.

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

- the achievement of girls, less able students and students requiring school intervention at both key stages, to determine whether teaching is meeting the needs of all students
- the effectiveness of care, guidance and support for more vulnerable students, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of leaders' and managers' actions to raise achievement
- the overall effectiveness of the sixth form.

Information about the school

The school is a larger-than-average specialist science college. Most students are from higher-than-average levels of social-economic circumstances and the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Most students are of White British heritage. A smaller-than-average proportion of students has special educational needs and/or disabilities. Very few students speak a first language other than English.

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

2

Main findings

Blenheim High School is a caring, supportive school where students are overwhelmingly of the view that they are kept safe. It has been a challenging few years for leaders as difficulties in staffing have not enabled them to provide effective teaching to enable students to do their best. Leaders and managers have done well to stabilise the mathematics department, which three years ago was performing poorly. Since September, the school has made good efforts to ensure that all core subjects are performing satisfactorily. School data also show that students' achievement in English, mathematics and science is set to improve in 2010. Students significantly underachieved in English in 2009. Girls, less able students and students requiring school intervention at both key stages are now doing as well as their peers. The good curriculum has been strengthened well to engage the less able .

Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards that are broadly average; they make satisfactory progress in their learning to achieve average attainment in their GCSEs at the end of Year 11. Students achieve only satisfactorily because teaching is not effective enough to improve their pace of learning. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Inspectors did observe many good lessons, although only one outstanding lesson was observed. Inspectors observed some satisfactory lessons. Some teachers do not use assessment data precisely to enable them to assess students' understanding in lessons, or to ensure that lessons are pitched correctly to enable students to learn well. The quality of marked work seen by inspectors varied greatly. Inspectors saw some exemplary marking that gave detailed areas for improvement and identified the National Curriculum level students had achieved. However, where the marking of work was weaker, students were not given a clear understanding of what they needed to do to improve their work and, in many cases, they did not know how well they were progressing.

The standard of students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They make a good contribution to the school and its wider community. For example, the school council has been effective in influencing the design of the sixth-form block. Their work in the wider community includes supporting local primary schools and helping out in homes for the elderly. One Year 11 student remarked that: 'Year 7 students can approach us, we all get along well. We try to support them.' The school is harmonious and leaders and managers have worked hard to ensure that if any bullying occurs it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Students welcome the opportunities brought about by the specialist status. Students are able to take triple science as well as other more appropriate science qualifications.

Under the caring and purposeful leadership of the headteacher, leaders and managers have been swift in their analysis and actions to eradicate the underachievement of the

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previous year. Good clear, self-evaluation has led to improvement of the school's identified underachieving groups. However, the school's analysis of action taken to improve teaching and assessment is not yet sharp enough to bring about rapid improvement in students' achievements overall. The proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades including mathematics and English has continued to improve in the last three years. The improved achievement of these identified groups, the stability of teaching staff and the improved performance in all core subjects demonstrate a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of students, especially in mathematics and English, so that students make good progress by:
 - ensuring subject teachers use data in a more precise manner to enable them to assess how well students are making progress
 - bringing all teachers' marking up to the level of the best in order that students know precisely how to improve their performance
 - ensuring leaders and managers monitor effectively the results of their actions to improve teaching and assessment.

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

In 2009, the proportion of students who achieved five or more A* to C GCSEs including English and mathematics rose on previous years. In that year students no longer attained higher-than-average point scores in their best eight subjects, and their attainment in English and mathematics remained in line with the broadly average performance of previous years. School data indicate that English and mathematics are set to show some improvement and the school is on track to improve its five-or-more A* to C performance including English and mathematics.

Students made good progress in many lessons; however, some satisfactory lessons were observed. The progress of girls, less able students and students requiring school intervention is satisfactory; therefore overall students make satisfactory progress. Where students learn well, teachers don't allow students to get bored, pace in these lessons is fast and students have a good understanding of what they need to do to progress in their learning. Students consistently make good progress in design and technology. In these lessons, students used self-assessment well; they worked diligently and enjoyed their learning. Good checkpoints of learning are used by teachers to enable students to have a clear understanding of what they should have achieved at interim points in the lesson. In these lessons, students work collaboratively, but much of their learning is directed by teachers.

Students have a good appreciation of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and the participation rate in physical activities is high. Their understanding of health-related issues is also good. Students discussed how their concerns over fellow students'

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well-being have been acted upon. Students' rate of attendance is average, although improving. Students across different backgrounds work well together. The visits undertaken during the school's initiative of 'bridging the cultural chasm' where students had the opportunity to visit Auschwitz, a London theatre and a Buddhist temple have been appreciated by students.

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	3
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	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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In the stronger lessons, inspectors observed good planning of activities by teachers. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. The range of learning activities used in these lessons is good. More thought is being given to developing students' own learning skills and their ability to evaluate the progress they have made. Nevertheless, the school recognises that it has more to do to build on these aspects. While the school involves parents and students in setting targets, teachers' assessment of students' progress in relation to their targets is inconsistent across the school and within subjects.

The curriculum in Key Stage 3 has been successful in raising attainment in literacy and numeracy for more vulnerable pupils. At Key Stage 4 the school has sought to meet the

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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needs of all ability groups. More able students report being stretched in many of their subjects and appreciate opportunities where they can 'think outside the box'. The school has broadened the provision for less able students and this is having good impact on their numeracy and literacy skills. The science specialist status provides a good range of provision and is engaging students across all year groups.

The good care, guidance and support starts with the thoughtful transition arrangements for students in Year 7 and Year 9. It continues with the good preparation for careers and university life for students in the sixth form. The school has put in place 'tea parties' for individual students or a small group of students transferring from a particular primary school. Bullying is dealt with promptly and effectively. Vulnerable students receive good support from staff and outside agencies, resulting in them attending well and making satisfactory progress. The school has been effective in reducing the proportion of students who persistently do not attend school and in improving the overall rate of attendance and attainment of students who were traditionally hard to reach.

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, governors and senior staff share a well-developed vision for the school's improvement. The school improvement plan is linked effectively to the needs of its students and reflects the school's care for their progress and well-being. The school achieved the majority of its specialist status targets in 2009. Governors are well informed and clearly understand the school's priorities, providing a satisfactory level of challenge and good support. Through its self-evaluation the school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding procedures for the care and well-being of all students are robust. The school's actions to eradicate significant underachievement of groups of students as well as providing a harmonious school community enable it to demonstrate that it promotes equality of opportunity well. The many community partnerships that the school has in place have been effective in helping the school remove barriers to learning and to enhance its curriculum provision. The school works well with parents, who contribute well towards their child's learning. There are many strong examples of how the school has been successful in promoting community cohesion. However, the school recognises that a clearer strategy to enable them to see the impact of their actions is now required.

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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	2
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

Sixth form

A large proportion of students who come from other institutions in the borough enter the sixth form with levels of attainment that are below national averages. Blenheim High School's sixth form is inclusive, allowing students to take traditional academic advanced qualifications with lower-than-average grades at GCSE. Students achieve well. They make outstanding progress to achieve above-average attainment in their AS-level courses, although they achieve average grades at A level. Overall, inspectors judged attainment to be average; achievement is good. This good achievement is due to good teaching, an effective curriculum and good care, guidance and support. Students' progress well is monitored well.

Leadership of the sixth form has enabled students to achieve well. Over the last three years, leaders have maintained the good student outcomes. There is a clear drive by leaders for continuous improvement. The head of sixth form is working well with partners in the local 14'19 consortium to ensure that students are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum.

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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	1

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming view of parents was that the school keeps their child safe. They are happy with their child's experience at school, and consider that the school is led and managed effectively. A few parents felt that the school did not help their child to have a healthy lifestyle. However, students were of a firm view that the school enabled them to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blenheim 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 596 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1381 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	169	28	370	62	42	7	10	2
The school keeps my child safe	238	40	341	57	9	2	4	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	221	37	342	57	28	5	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	169	28	367	62	44	7	5	1
The teaching is good at this school	158	27	391	66	32	5	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	148	25	388	65	50	8	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	87	15	392	66	98	16	7	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)	154	26	363	61	34	6	6	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	152	26	379	64	51	9	5	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	192	32	322	54	45	8	13	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	111	19	370	62	56	9	9	2
The school is led and managed effectively	218	37	336	56	19	3	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	245	41	316	53	23	4	5	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 Blenheim High School, Epsom KT19 9BH

Thank you for the help you gave the inspection team when we came to your school. We judged that the school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. Students in the sixth form receive a good standard of education. You achieve satisfactorily, which in the main is due to the satisfactory teaching and assessment in lessons. We did judge that the school provides you with good care, guidance and support. The good curriculum is also enabling students who did not do so well last year to achieve as well as other students. You told us that leaders at the school keep you exceptionally safe.

Your school is good at preparing you for your future lives and at ensuring you all adopt healthy lifestyles. You also make a good contribution to your community in the variety of activities you undertake in school and in the local community. Your leaders and managers have clear plans for how to bring about further improvement and have shown good progress this year in tackling the underachievement of some of your peers.

We did identify that there were some points that the school needs to pay particular attention to. We have asked the school to:

- raise your achievement, especially in mathematics and English, so that you make good progress by:
- ensuring subject teachers use data in a more precise manner to enable them to assess how well you are making progress
- bringing all teachers' marking up to the level of the best in order that you know precisely how to improve your performance
- leaders and managers monitoring effectively the results of their actions to improve teaching and assessment.

Please continue to do your part by attending school regularly, doing your homework and contributing to lessons.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price

Her Majesty's Inspector

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