

Buile Hill Visual Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105974
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	355868
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Susan Wareing HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	749
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nikki Anderson
Headteacher	Mrs Win O'Neill
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 25 lessons taught by 25 different teachers, visited one assembly and three form-tutor periods. One of the lessons was observed jointly with a senior leader. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at information from the school's systems for monitoring and evaluating performance and for tracking students' progress. They also looked at records of governors' meetings, school policy documents, including those related to safeguarding, and records of external evaluation of the school's work. Completed questionnaires from 115 parents and carers were received and analysed.

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

- How well the students achieve, especially in English and mathematics.
- The extent to which teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection.
- The quality of the curriculum and its effectiveness in meeting the needs and aspirations of all students, especially those of gifted and talented students.
- The quality of leadership and management at all levels, especially the effectiveness of the school's monitoring and evaluation of recent initiatives to raise attainment.

Information about the school

Buile Hill Visual Arts College is a smaller-than-average comprehensive school. Most of its students are of White British heritage and very few are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high and increasing, but the proportion of those who have a statement of special educational needs is half the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high at 36%. The school's population is stable and beginning to grow again, after a period of falling numbers. Buile Hill's Extended School Status provides adult learning courses to the local community and study support for gifted and talented students. The Extended Schools Status also funds a Parental Engagement Officer to strengthen links with parents from Buile Hill and also its partner primary schools. The school gained the Artsmark and Sportsmark awards in 2009 and the Healthy Schools Award in 2010.

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

Buile Hill Visual Arts College is an effective and rapidly improving school. It has several good features. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall. Following a period during which attainment has been too low, its improvement has accelerated significantly over the last year against most measures. However, performance in terms of five or more GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics remains below the national average. Assessment information held by the school shows that the rising trend in attainment will be repeated in the validated Year 11 examination results for 2010. Most students make good progress from their starting points during their time in school. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory and improving.

This improvement reflects the much needed stability brought to the school by the good leadership and management of the very capable headteacher and senior leaders. The purposeful, shared culture that they have established has led to significant improvements in provision; for example, in the good quality of the curriculum, which better meets students' individual needs, interests and aspirations. The school's recently improved system for tracking students' progress is enabling a sharper focus on students at risk of failure at Key Stage 4, but information is not yet consistently well used across the whole school to target support as accurately and early as it could.

The school has set in place more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of its performance, but checks on the progress of its many new initiatives are not yet frequent enough and measures of their success are not yet precise enough to ensure that they are implemented consistently enough across all departments.

The school has several other good features. These include:

- the day-to-day care and support of students and the extent to which they feel and are kept safe
- the contribution made by the school to help students to choose healthy lifestyles
- the improvement in students' behaviour and attendance
- the school's promotion of equal opportunities and the way in which it tackles discrimination
- the effectiveness of the school's work in partnership with others to promote students' learning and well-being.

The school understands that there is more to be done to ensure good achievement for all students: for example, firm plans are in place to strengthen the impact of teaching assistants who support those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The raising of attainment, especially in mathematics, is a continuing priority for the

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school. Although the quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, it remains satisfactory and inconsistent across departments.

Nevertheless, the improvements secured since the last inspection, the improving achievement of students and the good leadership and management of the school, especially in its astute use of the art specialism to improve the school, attest to the school's good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, especially in mathematics, by maintaining and intensifying current successful strategies for improvement.
- Ensure that the more focused support planned for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to achieve as well as their peers.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - improving teachers' expertise in planning to meet the individual needs of students and in encouraging their independence and imagination
 - increasing consistency in the application of school policies and practices within and across departments.
- Ensure that new initiatives have maximum impact across the school by:
 - focussing sharply on a smaller number of key priorities
 - establishing more precise measures of their successful implementation
 - checking their progress more regularly in order to be able to intervene more rapidly on any underperformance.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment, as measured against national averages, has remained low since the last inspection, but it is improving strongly, sometimes more rapidly than the national trend. However, attainment in terms of five good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is below the national average. There are pockets of high attainment in the specialist subject of art and also in drama and music. The great majority of students leave school with a GCSE qualification in at least one subject, which contributes to their effective preparation for their future life. Very few students do not enter further education, employment or training when they leave Year 11.

Students enter the school with attainment that is below the national average. Many have very low levels of literacy. From these starting points, value-added information shows that most students generally make good progress and that the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory. In lessons seen during the inspection, the progress of all groups of pupils was at least satisfactory.

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This reflects the good support that students receive with their learning and the school's improving use of assessment information. Value-added information indicates that pupils make good progress in mathematics, although attainment in mathematics is low. Potentially effective measures have been put in place to tackle this, although their impact is not yet fully evident in examination results. The progress of students in English is improving and was at least satisfactory in lessons observed.

A few parents and some staff express concern about safety and behaviour, but most students, including the most vulnerable, say that they feel safe and well supported because there is always a wide range of adults to turn to whenever they need help. They are aware that some bullying exists but know how and where to find effective help when it occurs. The school recognises the need to raise students' awareness further in terms of e-safety.

Observations during the inspection, in lessons and around the school, show that most students behave well and enjoy good relationships with their teachers and their peers. The school works hard to encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles, through the range of healthy canteen options, influenced by the active voice of the school council, the Personal Social Health and Citizenship Education curriculum and visiting speakers from a range of external agencies. Attendance is average.

The students enjoy a range of opportunities to take on responsibilities as prefects, mentors to younger students and charity fund-raisers; for example, for guide dogs for the blind. Students know and understand the consequences of their actions and the school's specialist art status enhances their awareness of cultures beyond their immediate surroundings. The school is aware of the need to provide more opportunities for spiritual development.

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	4
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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	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 to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, with an increased proportion of good and outstanding teaching. However, it remains satisfactory overall. In the best lessons seen during the inspection, high levels of engagement, interest and motivation enabled students to make good progress. This is because in these lessons teachers' planning is well tailored to students' individual needs and therefore appropriately challenging. Good expertise in assessment allows students to manage themselves and their learning through good opportunities to work independently of the teacher in groups and pairs. In satisfactory lessons, there is too much direction by the teacher, inappropriate pace, and lack of opportunities for imaginative tasks. This results in lack of interest and sometimes low-level inattention on the part of students. While there are some good examples of detailed marking, giving advice to students on how to improve their work, there are also some inconsistencies within and across subjects.

The school's specialist art status supports a good and imaginative curriculum that effectively promotes students' good academic progress and their personal development. Flexible time-tabling at Key Stage 4 enables early entry for some GCSE subjects and full-day options outside the school environment. The art specialism contributes to a wide variety of extra-curricular activities that are much appreciated by students, but the school does not yet monitor in sufficient detail the take-up of these options.

Extra-curricular provision for gifted and talented students is developing and includes residential courses and the 'Food for Thought' event, which provides opportunities to meet local university students. Cross-curricular numeracy and information and communication technology are not yet as well established across all subjects as literacy.

The pastoral care and support for students, especially the arrangements for transition arrangements from primary school, is a strong feature of the school and enables students to settle in well, both socially and academically. Focused support groups have had a significant impact: for example, the boys' achievement group for those at risk of failure, whose students achieved 50% GCSE passes at grades A* to C. There is close liaison with a range of external agencies and developing links with parents, as reflected in significantly increased attendance at parents' evenings. Academic guidance, especially in terms of transition after Year 11, is less well developed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	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 is relentless in her determination to improve the school and does not shrink from difficult decisions. She is well supported by senior leaders and both they and middle leaders have a very clear, shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Middle leaders say that they feel well supported and held to account in equal measure by their senior colleagues. Since the last inspection new, more effective systems have been put in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the impact of the school's planned actions to improve the school and to track students' progress. These systems have begun to raise achievement significantly in Year 11 and improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, information from these systems is not yet consistently well used across the whole school to target support as accurately and quickly as it could and to implement improvements consistently enough across all departments. The school selects appropriate priorities for development, but does not always focus sufficiently on the few key areas that would drive improvement fastest. Governance is satisfactory and improving. The relatively new governing body has been restructured and its members bring a wide variety of experience to their responsibilities. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses and are developing confidence to put forward their own ideas for the school's improvement and to provide an effective challenge.

Parents and carers are effectively informed of their children's progress and planned changes to the school. The school is now seeking ways of involving them more fully in decision-making about matters that affect them and their children.

The school's commitment to equality of opportunity for every student is evident in the improving achievement of different groups of students: for example, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and in the narrowing of the imbalance between the performance of girls and boys. The students have an effective voice in the school and provision is in place to challenge stereotypical views; for instance, through an anti-bullying week. The school has a sound understanding of the nature of its local community and its extensive range of partnerships, many of them through the school's specialist art status, has forged greater understanding of a variety of other cultural communities. The school recognises that there is more work to do in terms of international links. Partnerships are well used to improve achievement: for example, the school has done some innovative work on reading with its partner primary schools, in order to improve students' literacy on entry to the school. While operating under a

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legacy of severe financial constraints, the school has made significant improvements. For these reasons the school is judged to provide satisfactory and improving value for money. Arrangements for safeguarding students are very robust and highly effective.

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
	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	3
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

Views of parents and carers

The number of questionnaires returned was average for the size of the school. Most of the responses were supportive of the school but a few parents expressed some concerns about behaviour and safety. Inspectors observed students' behaviour in classrooms, around the school, held discussions with staff and students and scrutinised the school's behavioural records and found that behaviour is good and that the school's measures to keep students safe in and around school are also good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Buile Hill Visual Arts College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 115 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 749 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	43	58	50	6	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	51	44	61	53	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	31	61	53	7	6	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	26	65	57	8	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	33	65	57	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	23	70	61	9	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	37	61	53	8	7	1	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)	47	41	55	48	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	37	62	54	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	39	51	44	10	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	28	59	51	10	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	46	40	56	49	4	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	49	53	46	4	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Buile Hill Visual Arts College, Salford, M6 8RD

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome at your school. We enjoyed talking with you and you helped us to find out a lot about the school. The school provides you with a satisfactory and improving quality of education overall and has some notable strengths.

- During your time at school most of you make good progress and your examination results are improving, but we think that they could be better.
- The school gives you good care, guidance and support. Its curriculum meets your needs well and prepares you effectively for your further study and employment.
- As a specialist college for art and textiles, your school is very well equipped and studying art helps you to understand your own and other cultures.
- The school's arrangements for keeping you safe are good. This helps you to feel very secure and to enjoy school.
- You enjoy the variety of activities that the school organises for you, including sports and the arts. You make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community; for example, through the student council, charity-fund raising and musical performances.
- Your school is well led and your headteacher and senior teachers are very keen to improve it further. The quality of most of the teaching that you receive is satisfactory, but we think that the school could help you to do even better.

We have asked the school:

to help all of you to make even better progress in your learning by:

- making sure that more of your lessons are as good as the very best ones
- improving the way that the school uses information about how well you are doing so that you can be helped to improve as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

Her Majesty's Inspector

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