

Bullers Wood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136709
Local Authority	Not Applicable
Inspection number	355048
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline White HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,448
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Patrick
Headteacher	Nicholas Cross
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They observed 42 lessons and 42 teachers. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, and groups of students. They looked at the school's data on students' performance, records of the support provided to them and their progress, and scrutinised the school's improvement plans, policies and procedures, including health and safety and risk assessments. The inspection team analysed questionnaires completed by 328 parents and carers, 142 students and 90 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Students' attainment and progress in Key Stages 3 and 4, with particular attention to the progress of higher-attaining girls and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The quality of provision and students' achievement in the sixth form.
- The effectiveness of assessment practice in reducing variations in students' performance across subjects.

Information about the school

This larger-than-average girls' school, with a large, mixed sixth form, converted to academy status in May 2011. It has three specialisms in languages, applied learning and the leading edge partnership programme. The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Very few students are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is also lower than average. The school has achieved a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Artsmark Gold and Consultant School accreditation.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Bullers Wood School is an outstanding school, with an outstanding sixth form. It is led by a close-knit, ambitious senior team that is determined to improve outcomes for students. Their clear and well-communicated vision of success for all gives a common sense of purpose to students and staff. Students achieve very well throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 to attain high standards at the end of Year 11. The GCSE examination results have improved rapidly as a result of precisely targeted interventions and strengthened teaching. Students' positive attitudes contribute strongly to their achievement and high attendance. The warm and supportive relationships throughout the school are an important factor in their enjoyment of school. Mutual respect and tolerance underpin the ethos of the school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and is encouraged by the school's emphasis on valuing and trusting one another.

Arrangements for care, guidance and support are outstanding so that students feel completely safe and are confident that any difficulties they have will be dealt with appropriately and without delay. The excellent curriculum is enriched by an outstanding range of well-supported extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors, which help to bring learning alive. Students' acquisition and application of work-related skills make an excellent contribution to their preparation for life beyond school and their positive outlook. Almost all students progress into further education, employment or training. A large majority join the school's sixth form. The school's three specialisms give balance and flexibility to the curriculum and help to promote excellent links with local primary schools and the wider community generally. Students' contribution to the school and the wider community is outstanding. They are proud of, and committed to, their school, welcoming the extensive opportunities to take on responsibilities.

Teaching is good overall. In a range of lessons, outstanding practice was observed, although opportunities are sometimes missed to develop students' capacity to learn independently. In many lessons, assessment information is used to plan learning activities which challenge students with differing abilities, so that learning proceeds at an appropriate pace and students make at least good progress. However, there are pockets of inconsistent practice in its use, including variability in the quality of marking.

The headteacher's resolute leadership, combining good strategic vision with a strong visible presence in the school, has established a culture of high expectations. He is

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supported very well by a highly effective governing body and senior team. There are many strengths in middle leadership but some members of this team are still gaining experience and developing the skills of monitoring and evaluation. The school knows itself well. Robust self-evaluation is guided by a thorough analysis of performance data and development planning that gives a secure framework for further improvement. There is no room for complacency in this school, only a passionate pursuit of even higher standards. The tenacious commitment to achieving excellence and a strong track record of success verify the school's outstanding capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further by sharing teachers' expertise in:
 - assessment practice, including marking
 - strategies that develop students' capacity to learn independently.
- Ensure middle leaders are equally effective in evaluating and improving the work of their teams.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Attainment on entry to the school is above average. As a result of good teaching, an engaging curriculum, precisely focused intervention and students' good behaviour and attitudes to work, all groups of students make at least good progress. Some make excellent progress, for example those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals. Students' achievement overall is outstanding. Nearly all students achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C in 2010 and the school's performance at five or more grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been well above average for the last three years. The school's reliable assessment information shows that it is on track to achieve its challenging targets in 2011.

In the large majority of lessons observed by inspectors, students were achieving very well. There are teachers who are highly skilled in developing students as independent and self-motivated learners. For example, in one drama lesson, students were being trained to use sophisticated success criteria to evaluate each other's performances and identify strengths and points for improvement. These teaching and learning skills have not yet been fully shared. There are occasions when learning is led too much by the teacher, with missed opportunities to increase participation, give students more responsibility for learning and develop behaviours that will support a lifelong engagement with learning.

Students are confident that their views are listened to; they have a strong voice in school decisions and are actively involved in the review of their curriculum and the evaluation of teaching and learning. Members of the flourishing student council attend all meetings of the governing body. The continuity and strength of the

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pastoral system is demonstrated in students' good behaviour and their strong sense that they are valued as individuals.

Students demonstrate their commitment to the school and wider community through extensive charitable work and their participation in, and leadership of, a wide variety of improvement projects. Six students have gained seats on the Bromley Youth Council. Many contribute through the Duke of Edinburgh Award's scheme and work placements for child development and health and social care. Students have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles, as can be seen from their very high rates of participation in sporting activities and their understanding of what constitutes healthy eating.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons, students enjoy challenging work that develops their skills and understanding at a rapid pace. Assessment information is used effectively to plan a good variety of activities that are well matched to students' abilities and interests, and to the demands of the curriculum. For example, in a literacy lesson, the teacher used her detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in students' learning to sequence activities expertly and optimise progress. She elicited continuous feedback from students through sensitive questioning of individuals and the effective use of mini-whiteboards to pinpoint and tackle gaps in learning successfully. Where teaching is less effective, students' progress slows because available information about their prior attainment is not used well to plan learning

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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that meets their individual needs. The skills that drive students’ progress in lessons, for example, well-chosen and directed questioning and precise feedback about the next learning step, are unrefined.

The imaginatively planned curriculum is continually reviewed and developed to meet the needs of students. An excellent range of academic and vocational courses provide clear pathways to future opportunities. The impressive and popular programme of enrichment activities supports the development of students’ personal, social and leadership skills extremely well.

All students benefit from the school's outstanding procedures for care, guidance and support. They have confidence in the adults that care for them and appreciate the help they receive, including the careful arrangements at transition points from primary school and leading to higher education or employment. The proactive work of the pastoral team is very effective in ensuring vulnerable students are well provided for. Established and well-organised links with external agencies contribute to this high-quality support. There are many examples of the school helping students facing difficult circumstances in their lives to overcome obstacles and succeed in their learning. Support for looked after children is particularly well considered and effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, governors and the leadership team have given the school a clear direction in the journey to 'outstanding' since its last inspection. Raising the standard of teaching and learning to that of the very best is central to their shared vision for the school. Senior leaders recognise that some middle leaders are still gaining experience in this endeavour. However, clear lines of accountability, highly effective line management and frequent, rigorous reviews of outcomes for students underpin the school's rapid improvement. High-quality professional development is aligned with whole-school priorities for improvement as well as the needs of individual members of staff. Staff morale is high and teamwork is a strength.

The school works hard to ensure that all students have every opportunity to take part in everything. The academic performance of different groups of students is monitored carefully and is fundamental to the school's unwavering promotion of equality. Discrimination is not tolerated. The school is at the hub of many

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partnerships with local schools, voluntary organisations, higher education providers and educational development networks. These partnerships are carefully selected and their impact is fully evaluated. The school's specialisms have enhanced the extensive partnerships and increased opportunities to share and develop best practice, including leadership development.

Engagement with parents and carers is generally good. Their views are regularly sought, and, as a result of a few concerns about communications, the school is reviewing and developing the channels of communication that are available. The governing body challenges and supports the school effectively. Governors use their professional expertise and their knowledge of the school's data systems to excellent effect. There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues at all levels and procedures are very robust. The school ensures that students have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Creating cohesion and harmony within and beyond its own community is integral to the school's values. The school knows its context very well and makes an outstanding contribution to the well-being of the wider community; students benefit from their engagement with well-planned and evaluated projects that help to improve the lives of others.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The sixth form is led exceptionally well; a relentless focus on improvement ensures that all students have every opportunity to achieve their best outcomes. Typically, students begin their post-16 education with attainment that is above average and

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achieve very well to reach high standards. They thoroughly enjoy their studies, support each other well in lessons and collaborate effectively. Their personal development is outstanding. The wide range of enrichment activities available enhances students' economic well-being and encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students are highly positive role models. They make an admirable contribution to the community through their work with younger students, both in the main school and local primary schools, and through their numerous fundraising activities.

Curricular provision is outstanding. There is an extensive range of courses on offer, including applied as well as the more traditional qualifications. In nearly all of the lessons observed, students were making at least good progress. Teaching and assessment methods were tailored to individual needs, and motivated students to think for themselves and take responsibility for their learning. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge enhanced students' enjoyment of learning.

High retention rates are a reflection of excellent care, guidance and support. Students appreciate the time and consideration staff give to them and value the trusting relationships they have with them. Monitoring of students' progress is frequent, rigorous and highly effective. In all subject areas, specific learning targets for improvement are regularly set and fully understood by students. Additionally, excellent support and guidance is given to students to help them move on to the next stage of their lives, be it university, employment or training.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who completed questionnaires was higher than average. Most of those who responded say that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. They are very confident that the school is a safe environment, are pleased with the quality of teaching and care their children receive, and feel that the school is well led. A few parents and carers commented that school-to-home communication is not always sufficiently prompt or appropriate. A few others felt the school could do more to help them support their child's learning. However, the large majority of those who responded felt well informed and valued being included in planning how best to support their children. A very small number felt the school could do more to promote healthy lifestyles. However, inspection evidence did not endorse this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bullers Wood 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 328 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1448 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	106	32	183	56	28	9	6	2
The school keeps my child safe	122	37	195	59	5	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	83	25	214	65	20	6	6	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	97	30	200	61	23	7	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	86	26	216	66	17	5	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	19	198	60	55	17	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	15	203	62	57	17	3	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)	68	21	198	60	19	6	5	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	82	25	205	63	25	8	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	92	28	190	58	30	9	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	20	183	56	38	12	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	114	35	192	59	10	3	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	131	40	170	52	17	5	5	2

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



27 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Bullers Wood School, Chislehurst, BR7 5LJ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We are particularly grateful to those of you who gave up time to speak to us and those of you who completed the questionnaire. We were impressed with your good behaviour and the great pride you rightly take in your school. Your leaders and teachers provide you with an exceptionally high standard of care, keep you very safe and prepare you extremely well for life beyond school.

The inspection team considers your school to be outstanding. It offers an excellent quality of education, and you achieve high standards in your academic work and in your personal development. Teaching is good overall and in the most effective lessons you thoroughly enjoy learning. You appreciate the positive relationships that have been established and you make an excellent contribution to school life and the wider community. Your high attendance is commendable.

The school's leaders and managers are highly ambitious and have a determined commitment to ensuring each and every one of you succeeds. Your headteacher has no time for complacency and wants to achieve even higher standards. The inspection team has worked with him to identify the best way to make further improvements. We have decided it is important that teachers share their expertise in assessment practice and strategies for increasing your capacity to learn independently. In addition, we would like the most expert middle leaders to share their skills with those that are less experienced.

Please continue to support your school as strongly as you do. On behalf of the inspectors, I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector

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