

Bridgewater High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111447
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	378305
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Mark Williams 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Not Applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,650
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Whatmore
Headteacher	Tim Long
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2008
School address	Broomfields Road Appleton Warrington WA4 3AE
Telephone number	01925 263 919
Fax number	01925 861 434
Email address	sch_bridgewater_clerical@warrington.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 43 lessons taught by 42 teachers.

Meetings were held with six groups of pupils, five members of the governing body, and school and sixth form leaders. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, data and policies in relation to pupils' achievement and personal development, safeguarding, teaching, curriculum, and the quality of care, guidance and support. They also took into account the responses from the inspection questionnaires which totalled 84 from staff, 515 from pupils and 218 from parents and carers. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The achievement of students by the time they reach the end of Year 11:
 - Are the high standards they reach indicative of at least good progress?
 - Do students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least good progress from their starting points?
 - How much improved is the achievement of students in the sixth form?
- How well students, including those in the sixth form, demonstrate the positive attitudes and attributes in their personal development and whether these have been enhanced since the previous inspection.
- In the school's quest for outstanding teaching from Year 7 to Year 13, how well it currently meets the needs of all groups of students and leads to them to make at least good progress in their learning.
- How well the curriculum and care, guidance and support impact on the engagement, learning and personal development of all students, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those in the sixth form.
- The effectiveness of leaders' and the governing body's actions in securing further improvements to students' learning and personal development from an already strong position and how well parents and carers have been engaged with the school in this work.

Information about the school

This is a large school operating on two sites approximately half a mile apart. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Also below average is the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average. The school serves the area of south Warrington and takes students diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder from throughout the local authority. The sixth form is known as Appleton College.

The school, a Leading Edge School, has specialisms in art, science and mathematics. It has also received a wide range of awards, including Sports Mark, Arts Mark Gold, Investors in People, Investors in Careers and the Healthy School award. In addition, it has received a Certificate of Commendation from Cheshire Constabulary in 2011 for its work in promoting community cohesion. It also holds licences for the Adventurous Activity Licensing Authority and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

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

This is an outstanding school in which students from Year 7 to Year 13 display highly positive attitudes and attributes in their personal development, nearly all of which have improved since the previous inspection. High levels of attendance, excellent behaviour and outstanding contributions to the community are typical of Bridgewater's students.

The achievement of students by the time they reach the end of Year 11 is outstanding and good in the sixth form: both have improved well since the previous inspection. Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, reach consistently high standards in their GCSE examinations and equivalent courses, making good progress from generally above-average starting points. The progress students in Years 7 to 11 make is the result of an outstandingly rich and varied curriculum and excellent levels of care, guidance and support. These engage students very well and challenge them to give of their best. Support for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable is particularly strong, with all groups, including those diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder, making progress in line with their peers. Significant improvements to the previously satisfactory sixth form have led to students in Years 12 and 13 also making good progress in their learning to achieve better outcomes in their AS and A levels than in the past. The overall good quality of teaching students across the school receive also contributes well to this engagement and challenge, but not always consistently so. This is because teachers' use of day-to-day assessment in lessons, such as their marking of students' work and their dialogue with them, does not always push students on to the next steps in their learning. In addition, and while teaching quality ensures standards are high and progress is good, teachers are not always consistent in promoting good levels of literacy across all subjects.

Leadership across the school, including in the sixth form, is outstanding. Morale is high throughout the school and all members of staff and the governing body are clear in their roles. Robust monitoring and evaluation mean the school identifies very well its many strengths and is crystal clear about what it needs to improve and enhance. Parents are positive about the school and appreciate how well it runs across two sites on a day-to-day basis. As a result of leaders' actions, the school has improved well from an already strong position to secure outstanding outcomes for its students in Years 7 to 11 and good outcomes in Years 12 and 13. The school is in an

excellent position to improve further and has outstanding capacity to sustain this improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve students' already good learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers' marking and ongoing dialogue with students consistently challenge them by always giving them advice on how learning can be improved
 - ensuring a more consistent approach to promoting literacy across all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Record results at GCSE, thoughtful and considerate students who enjoy school, and high rates of attendance demonstrate just why outcomes for students at Bridgewater High School are outstanding.

Standards attained by students at GCSE, including the proportion gaining five or more subjects at grades A*-C including English and mathematics, have been consistently high since the previous inspection. This year's results show that 80% of students attained this standard. These high standards are the result of the good progress students make in their learning. Observations of students' learning in lessons and over time in their books and coursework show that this good progress is continuing. These strong features of achievement contribute very well to students' outstanding development of workplace and other skills.

All aspects of students' personal development are outstanding apart from the extent to which they adopt healthy lifestyles. This aspect is good. As students identify themselves, they do not always put their knowledge of healthy eating in particular into practice. Students are confident they are safe and are equally confident in articulating how they keep so. Their strong consideration of themselves and others locally and globally is commendable. Students themselves have decided upon charities to support and have raised substantial amounts as a result. In lessons they are very attentive to each others' contributions and give them high value. This was demonstrated in a number of lessons where, for example, they acted on the responses of their peers when performing anti-bullying plays with puppets and considered in history the opposing views of religion and science with regards to medicine. Such considerations and the very good behaviour observed by inspectors in and around school, coupled with the significant reduction in incidents, highlight why, over time, students' behaviour is excellent. The commendation received from the Chief Constable for the reduction in anti-social behaviour in the locality is further testament of this. Such consideration of others demonstrates why students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. It is further enhanced by the thought put into the many very impressive pieces of art work displayed around the school and the reciprocal links with a school in Soweto, South Africa.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum is outstanding. It includes a wide range of strategies at Key Stage 4 to promote high levels of achievement for the most able, for example through further certificated courses for those who have already high GCSE grades. For students across Key Stages 3 and 4 who struggle or whose circumstances make them vulnerable, there is very well-tailored support, sometimes through alternative provision, all of which contributes very well to the different groups of students making good progress. Students interviewed held in high regard the subject options and additional provision open to them, including opportunities for work experience. In addition to the taught curriculum, there is a wide selection of extra-curricular and enrichment activity, including educational visits abroad. Students' uptake of such opportunities is high.

The levels of care, guidance and support offered to students are also outstanding. Strong and supportive arrangements from transition from feeder primaries, the lower school and into the sixth form enable students to settle down into known and consistent routines for learning well. Students who have a particular need for a short period of time out of lessons are provided with high levels of support so they can, if necessary, be reintegrated into school and become effective learners. As one student said, commenting on support from a learning mentor, 'The school has turned me around'. Such high levels of support, coupled with the outstanding curriculum, contribute very well to the achievement of students and, equally importantly, to their personal development too.

The quality of teaching overall and over time is good with some that is outstanding. There is none that is less than satisfactory. The result of such quality is that students with generally above-average attainment on entry to the school make good progress to reach high standards. This good and better teaching is typified by clear planning that focuses on the different needs of students well and what they are to learn, a brisk pace to learning, and good questioning to engage and challenge students and

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

to check their understanding. Also, teachers make effective use of resources such as electronic whiteboards. In such lessons it is not uncommon for the students themselves to be a resource, for example sharing internet research completed at home. In some lessons, however, these features are not as strong and the learning of students becomes satisfactory rather than good. Teachers’ use of assessment, marking and ongoing dialogue with students, for example, is also variable, even in lessons where teaching is good. This means that students who could be stretched to achieve more are not always challenged to do so. In addition, students’ work in books highlights that marking does not consistently promote the development of students’ literacy skills.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, leaders and the governing body have successfully established a highly cohesive learning community. All in the school are clear about their roles and levels of accountability are high. The result is that outcomes for students are outstanding and there is strong drive for sustained excellence. This ensures equality of opportunity is promoted very well. Partnerships with external agencies are very strong and productive, leading to all groups of students making good progress in their learning and personal development. Also outstanding is the school’s promotion of community cohesion which, in conjunction with a local youth partnership, has led to a reduction in anti-social behaviour and, more globally, has provided students with the opportunity to meet and mix with peers from a school in South Africa.

The governing body supports and challenges leaders robustly and meets all its responsibilities very well. There are thorough arrangements in place for the safeguarding of students. Two areas of leadership are of good quality, namely the leadership and management of teaching and learning and the school’s engagement with parents. Leaders have correctly identified the inconsistencies in day-to-day assessment and have plans in place with the aim of addressing these. They also have plans to improve home–school communication to enable parents and carers to engage further with the school to promote students’ learning and personal development.

These are the grades for the 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

There has been significant improvement in the overall effectiveness of the sixth form. Satisfactory just three years ago, it continues to improve and is now good. This is the result, as in the main school, of outstanding leadership focused on excellence. Systems for pastoral and academic support are much improved and highly effective. The sixth form leads the way by example in exploiting opportunities for students' use of the virtual learning environment.

Students benefit from good teaching and a wide range of curriculum options, although recruitment in some subjects remains low. Arrangements for transition between Years 11 and 12 help students settle into their studies well. The school tracks the progress students are making equally effectively. The result is that outcomes for students are good. Students now make good progress, and most noticeably so in their AS studies, to reach above-average standards by the end of Year 13. They take responsibility for their own health, safety and well-being. They contribute to the school and wider community through, for example, 'buddying up' to support younger students and making representations to the governing body about creating positions of head boy and head girl.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	

Views of parents and carers

The school's relationship with parents and carers is strong. That said, not all agree their suggestions are taken into account or that they are involved as fully as they could be in their children's learning. A few parents gave examples of where they thought these views were accurate while a few offered examples to show that, for them, the opposite was true. Inspectors noted the school's efforts to communicate with parents and carers, such as the consultation about the enrichment curriculum and changes to the school day. They also noted that a new website is in the process of being developed. The majority of parents and carers hold the view that the school deals successfully with unacceptable behaviour. Of those who did not agree, only a few made comments relating mainly to individual cases. In judging behaviour to be outstanding, inspectors looked not only at what they could see during the inspection but also at the reduction in incidents and the school's contribution to reducing anti-

social behaviour locally. Inspectors were more than satisfied that the behaviour they observed was typical of that found in the school when inspectors were not present.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bridgewater 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 218 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,650 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	86	39	121	56	7	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	90	41	124	57	1	0	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	66	30	133	61	7	3	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	64	29	131	60	14	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	73	33	131	60	4	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	20	140	64	24	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	15	158	72	17	8	4	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)	71	33	131	60	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	68	31	119	55	19	9	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	57	26	131	60	4	2	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	22	130	60	12	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	84	39	119	55	3	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	98	45	111	51	3	1	1	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 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



25 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Bridgewater High School, Warrington, WA4 3AE

You will recall that a team of five colleagues and I inspected your school recently. On behalf of the inspection team I am writing to thank you for your help and cooperation. We valued greatly your views and contribution to the inspection through discussions and your completion of the inspection questionnaire.

As a result of our inspection, I am delighted to tell you that your school is outstanding. Very well done to you all! These are just some of the features which led us to our decision:

- You display highly positive attitudes and attributes in your personal development as seen by, for example, your high attendance, excellent behaviour, outstanding contributions to the community, and your thoughtful consideration of one another.
- You achieve outstandingly well by the end of Year 11 and well in the sixth form, all of you making good progress in your learning.
- You benefit from an outstanding curriculum, excellent levels of care, guidance and support and good teaching.
- Outstanding leadership ensures your school runs very well on a day-to-day basis and is geared to securing excellence for you.

Your school is very well placed to improve further still. To help it do so we have asked your leaders to ensure that your teachers enable you to make even better progress in your learning by ensuring their marking and discussions with you always pinpoint ways of challenging you to improve your work. We have also asked that good levels of literacy are promoted across all subjects. We are very confident as an inspection team that you will play a full part in helping the school address these recommendations. We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

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