

# Biddenham International School and Sports College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109690
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bedford Borough
<b>Inspection number</b>	356605
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lindsay Hebditch HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1109
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	325
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carole Bell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michael Berrill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 October 2007
<b>School address</b>	Biddenham Turn Bedford MK40 4AZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 41 lessons, saw 37 teachers and held meetings with groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documents including the school's improvement plan, data on the progress of current students and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors considered questionnaire responses from 122 parents, 117 students and 74 staff.

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

- the attainment and progress of different groups of students
- the impact of the school's specialist status on students' experiences and outcomes
- the effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment during lessons in order to move students on in their learning.

## Information about the school

This is a larger than average school. It has held specialist sports college status since 2003 and became an international school in 2008. More than half the students are from minority ethnic groups with the largest proportions of these students being of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The percentage of students with special education needs and/or disabilities is higher than average although the proportion of those with a statement of educational needs is average. Their needs include specific learning, moderate learning and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school in which students learn in a safe, supportive and highly inclusive environment. They also have a lot of fun. What makes the school special is the way that it brings together young people from very different backgrounds so that they can work and develop successfully together. Academic progress is good, and many aspects of personal and social development, including behaviour, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the contribution that students make to the community are outstanding. Students have a strong voice in the running of the school.

Most lessons are at least good and, in the best examples, inspectors observed how the enthusiasm of the teachers helped bring their subjects to life. In a minority of lessons, however, teaching was less imaginative and did not always match the ability of everyone in the class or engage them in their learning. Students mostly receive good verbal feedback on their work but marking varies in quality and sometimes lacks sufficient information for students to be clear about how to improve their work.

The school's curriculum provides exceptional choice, particularly in Key Stage 4, and meets the needs of students very well. Students receive outstanding care, guidance and support. Students with special education needs and/or disabilities and those of minority ethnic heritage benefit from a wide range of additional help both in and outside of lessons so that their progress matches that of other students.

The Principal and Head of School provide strong and effective leadership and work tirelessly to promote the inclusive ethos and values of the school both within it and in the local community. Partnership working, safeguarding and the school's response to community cohesion are outstanding. The Principal, governors and senior leaders have a clear view of the school's priorities but the usefulness of the school's planning is reduced by the lack of detailed evaluation to identify precise actions for improvement and targets. Self-evaluation is overly descriptive. The school has been successful in remedying the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and maintains its good capacity to improve.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning in lessons by ensuring that:
  - activities for all groups of students build on their prior attainment and are sufficiently challenging
  - teachers encourage creativity, including the more effective use of information technology, so that students are more actively engaged in their learning

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- good assessment practices are shared more effectively so that marking and feedback are of a consistently high standard and provide sufficient guidance for students to know how to improve.
- Evaluate the work of the school more systematically so that:
  - action plans are better informed by current practice and contain more precise targets
  - self-evaluation provides an accurate statement of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Many students join the school with below average prior attainment and an uncertain grasp of literacy and numeracy. Nevertheless they make good progress, so that by the time they complete Key Stage 4 attainment is average. The percentage of students who gain five A\* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics has improved markedly since the last inspection and is now close to the national average. In lessons students work hard and develop good study habits. The school strenuously encourages students from different backgrounds to do well. Students of minority ethnic heritage are making progress which matches, or exceeds that of other students and the attainment of different groups is becoming more consistent. The school has a highly effective programme of personal learning to support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities which has helped ensure that their progress is in line with their peers.

Students enjoy all aspects of school life and feel valued by their teachers. This is reflected in their attendance, which has improved since the last inspection and is now above average. The overwhelming majority of parents and students themselves say that the school keeps its students safe and this makes a powerful contribution to students' good learning. Students' standards of behaviour are very high. Students make a significant contribution to the calm atmosphere in the school because they appreciate boundaries and want to behave well. There is very little bullying, but any incidents that do occur are reported and dealt with swiftly and efficiently. Students are fully aware of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The majority of them cycle or walk to school and take advantage of the excellent opportunities to participate in organised sporting activities. Students also appreciate the importance of a healthy diet but a significant minority of them think, and inspectors agree, that the school could provide further encouragement to eat healthily. Students are quick to take an initiative and eager to take up additional responsibilities within and outside school. They take responsibility extremely seriously and this prepares them well for their future social and economic well-being. Students' cultural awareness and appreciation are very wide because of the excellent links with the local community and the strong and effective promotion of global issues in the school, frequently through the medium of sport. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. There are exceptional opportunities for students of all faiths to reflect on life and learning. Students are extremely mature and articulate in expressing their ideas and opinions and are able to promote the views of others sympathetically and convincingly.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

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

## How effective is the provision?

Most lessons are good but inspectors also observed a minority of lessons which were truly inspirational in capturing and maintaining students' interest. Teachers have high expectations of students and demonstrate good subject knowledge. In the best lessons teachers plan absorbing learning activities and use very effective questioning to build on students' prior learning and help them make good progress. However, teachers sometimes dominate lessons, reducing the creativity and independence of learners. Information technology is used effectively to support learning in mathematics but is less well used in other subjects. Assessment practices are of variable quality. In the best examples teachers make effective use of assessment to match tasks and activities to students' abilities, but this is not always the case. The marking of written work and feedback to students is of variable quality, with some examples of cursory marking and little guidance on how to improve the work.

The curriculum meets the needs of all students. A strong focus on the development of literacy and numeracy lies at the heart of curriculum planning and this has made a significant contribution to the improvement in standards. The very broad subject choice, together with the development of personalised learning programmes, provides students with a rich variety of learning pathways, with a particularly extensive offer in Key Stage 4. Students further benefit from an outstanding range of out-of-school activities. The development of teamwork, collaborative learning and coaching through the school's

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specialism has had a major positive impact on learning and curriculum development throughout the school.

The excellent arrangements for the care, guidance and support for students, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, underpin the ethos of the school and make a strong contribution to its success. One student voiced the opinion of many others when he said, 'This school never gives up on anybody'. As a consequence of the school's efforts, attendance has improved and the number of exclusions has fallen. Transition arrangements are secure and students learning English as an additional language receive an effective induction programme and subsequent support. Information to help students make wise life choices is easily accessible and of high quality. Facilities are outstanding and include a special unit which enables students who have been ill to make an early return to school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The Principal and Head of School, ably supported by a strong leadership team, have worked strenuously and successfully to create an inclusive school in which individual students are valued equally and achieve well. Managers at all levels share his ambition and there is a relentless drive in the school to raise standards still further. Management practices are straightforward and generally highly effective, although the lack of rigour in evaluating some of the school's key business, including equality of opportunity and liaison with parents, reduces the effectiveness of development planning. Governors know the school very well. They help shape its future and monitor its performance carefully. Initiatives to engage with parents and carers are productive, although a minority of parents feel that the school could do still more to keep them informed.

The school has an excellent record of working in partnership with other organisations to secure improvements for young people. Partnership working which helps support the welfare of students is exceptionally strong and its impact can be seen in the broad range of specialised services which are available to improve life chances and support learning. Providing equality of opportunity for all is central to the school's work and firmly embedded in its working practices, if not always clearly articulated in its development plans. The performance of different groups of students is monitored closely and actions put in place to reduce differences in achievement have been successful.

Safeguarding procedures were identified as an area for further development at the previous inspection but are now a major strength of the school and far exceed statutory requirements. The school plays a major role in promoting community cohesion and has a

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strong track record of successfully overcoming barriers to learning. The school operates within a very mixed religious, ethnic and socio-economic area but students say that they feel part of a safe, tolerant and harmonious community whilst at school. The school is well maintained. Resources are effectively deployed and value for money is good.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

There is a real sense of community in the sixth form; students are very happy to be there and act as excellent role models to their younger peers. Sixth formers are mature, articulate and keen to do well. They make good progress, particularly in GCE A-level subjects, but the proportion of high grades they achieve is below average. The one year 'access' course is a strong feature and enables students who require further time and support to prepare for advanced level study to receive it. Students do very well on this course but there are insufficient appropriate progression opportunities for them after they have finished it. Progression into higher education is good, including a high proportion of students who come from backgrounds where there has been no previous experience of higher education. The head of sixth form provides strong leadership and support.

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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
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	2

## **Views of parents and carers**

Most of the small number of parents and carers who responded to the survey said that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. A small minority of parents and carers were concerned that their children were not making enough progress but inspectors found that students were making good progress.

A minority of parents and carers did not agree that the school helped them support their children's learning or took account of their suggestions and concerns but inspectors did not find sufficient evidence to support these views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Biddenham International School and Sports 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 122 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1109 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	46	60	49	4	3	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	50	41	65	53	4	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	51	42	57	47	9	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	34	60	49	13	11	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	38	31	70	57	5	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	30	63	52	18	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	25	70	57	17	14	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)	44	36	64	52	5	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	33	67	55	8	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	27	72	59	8	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	28	63	52	11	9	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	54	44	56	46	4	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	47	51	42	11	9	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 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	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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



24 September 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Biddenham International School and Sports College, Bedford, MK40 4AZ**

Thank you for the friendly welcome that you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school this week. We enjoyed talking to you and were very impressed by your excellent behaviour. Please also pass on our thanks to your parents and carers for taking the trouble to complete our questionnaire.

We agree with you that Biddenham International School and Sports College is a good school where teaching is good, you learn well and make good progress. It is a harmonious place where everyone gets on well together and every individual really matters. The Principal and all of the staff are dedicated to making sure that everyone has the opportunity to do their best and you respond to this very well, for example in the way you look out for each other, your improving attendance and your excellent community awareness.

We think that the curriculum you follow and the care, guidance and support you receive are both outstanding. One of you said, 'This school never gives up on anybody' and we agree. The Principal and senior leaders want to make sure that the school keeps improving and we worked with them to identify these things to make the school even better.

Improve lessons by making sure that they are exciting and that there are activities in them which everyone can benefit from. The quality of marking and the feedback you receive could be improved in a few areas too.

Evaluate more thoroughly how well the school is doing so that it is easier to identify what is working well and what needs improving.

You can help your school to improve further by always doing your best and continuing to respect the fact that everybody is different.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lindsay Hebditch

Her Majesty's Inspector

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