

Inspection Report

BELVOIR HIGH SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

Unique Reference Number: 120259

LEA: Leicestershire

Headteacher: Mr J M Sherwin

Chair of Governors: Mrs V Umbers

Lead Inspector: Bob Roberts HMI

Inspection Dates: 22 - 23 September 2004

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INTRODUCTION

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of Belvoir High School and of the local education authority. The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an independent lay inspector.

Key for inspection grades:

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Description of the school

Belvoir High School is a secondary comprehensive school for pupils aged 10 to 14 years who live in the village of Bottesford and the surrounding area of the Vale of Belvoir. At the time of inspection there were 402 pupils on roll, which is average for a school of this type. Clear data was not available regarding the attainment of pupils on entry to the school in Year 6. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average, as is the number with special educational needs. Almost all the pupils are of white British heritage. The school is a centre for community education for the surrounding area.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a good school with some very good features and the potential for further improvement. The school's evaluation of its own work, which provided the starting point for this inspection, is clear and accurate. Standards of achievement at the end of Year 6 are lower than they should be, but by the end of Year 9 all pupils have made very good progress. Teaching is good and the atmosphere is friendly, supportive and productive. The personal development of pupils is taken as seriously as their academic progress and they are very happy. A great many pupils take advantage of the wide range of opportunities offered by the school. The school is well led and managed. There is a clear view of both the current strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done in the future. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) remains inadequate from the last inspection. Overall the school offers good value for money.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has maintained its high standards and they continue to be well above the national average. There have been significant improvements to premises and further developments are underway. On the specific issues raised at the last inspection, progress is mixed. Communication with parents is now good and significant improvements have been made regarding the use of assessment, particularly in monitoring the progress of older pupils. However, provision for ICT remains inadequate.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The capacity of the school to improve further is very good. While valuing what is good at present, the senior management team are aware of the potential for further improvement. The school has developed stringent review processes and is open to change. There is a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further:

- implement strategies for ICT within and across the curriculum to improve achievement for pupils
- gather performance achievement data for pupils entering the school in Year 6, and use it to identify appropriate strategies for teaching, targeting areas of particular concern
- ensure that learning activities consistently take account of the needs of individual pupils.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

At the end of their first year at the school, pupils reach standards which are in line with national averages but well below what might be expected of them, given their performance at the age of seven. Over the next three years, however, there is a rapid improvement in performance so that, by the end of their time at the school, pupils are reaching standards well above national averages in all core subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining higher levels in national tests at the end of Year 9 in mathematics and science is particularly impressive. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls. For three years there was a decline in boys' performance in English but this has been arrested. Teachers' assessments for non-core subjects show that standards are above average in all areas except ICT, where a history of a lack of resources has hindered progress. There is a lack of reliable information on the performance of pupils when they enter the school and this makes it difficult for the school to judge whether they have made sufficient progress by the time they reach the end of Year 6.

Attendance is satisfactory and attitudes and behaviour are very good. The school provides a very caring environment where pupils feel safe and free to express their ideas and feelings. They know right from wrong and respect school and class rules, several of which they have helped to formulate. The policy of 'zero tolerance' for chewing gum and dropping litter, for example, has come directly from the pupils and its impact is evident in the cleanliness of the site. Pupils are given responsibility and take it well. The 'buddy' system, 'bully blocker' arrangements and the school council are taken very seriously. Pupils are happy and have very good attitudes to work. Pupils contribute to the local community through charity work, public performances and a regular newsletter. Work in the wider community includes raising money for a linked school in Peru. Multicultural awareness is developed through this and a range of other curricular activities, including a very strong arts programme. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the businesses they established as part of their personal social and health education work. They also expressed the view that they would value greater involvement in deciding how profits made from the businesses were spent. There is no daily act of collective worship but many pupils take the opportunity provided for them to reflect quietly in the school's garden of remembrance.

Grade: 2

QUALITY OF PROVISION

Overall, provision is good. The school has good systems in place for identifying strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning. and bringing about improvement. Overall teaching and learning are good; although it ranged from very good to inadequate during the inspection.

Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum and the school follows the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. At present, ICT suffers from a lack of computers and a suitable base, though the new computer suite is nearing completion. Reading and writing skills are enhanced through the "literacy across the curriculum" initiative, where teachers in all subjects incorporate elements of the national literacy strategy into their work. Pupils with particular strengths, including the

more able, have the opportunity to excel, for example, in science and the expressive arts. A number of pupils have taken part in county summer schools for the more able pupils. The excellent range of lunch-time and out-of-hours clubs enables pupils to pursue their interests, and participation rates are high. Individual skills and aptitudes are catered for well. For example, in music, individual singing tuition is provided as well as tutoring with a wide range of musical instruments.

Whether teaching to mixed ability or groups organised by ability, teachers taught the same things, asking harder or easier questions to match the pupils' levels of understanding. This was generally effective and pupils' interest was sustained. However, teachers often did not prepare specifically for the different ability groups within a class, so that work was sometimes too easy or too hard. Creating classes by ability has recently been introduced in mathematics for Year 6 and this has enabled the more able pupils, of whom there are many, to make accelerated progress.

A great deal of effort has been put into assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress, involving them (and parents) in reviewing what has been achieved and what needs to be done next. There are clear policies to guide teachers in assessing pupils' work and ensuring they know what they are to learn. In the good lessons seen, clear learning objectives were shared with pupils at the beginning, and reinforced during the lesson, this helped keep them focused on the task. In some of the best lessons, teachers' planning took account of what had previously been learned well and what had not been fully understood, so teaching was adapted to learners' needs. However, there were several lessons where learning objectives were not clear and not reviewed, and as a result learning was less effective because pupils were unclear about what they were expected to learn.

A great strength of the school is its caring and supportive ethos, and this is firmly based in the good and often excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers value the contribution each pupil makes. They have high expectations of behaviour and attitudes, and lead by example. Pupils are trusted by teachers; for example, they have access to all parts of the school to an unusual degree during breaks and lunchtime. Pupils respond very well to the combination of expectation and care. The health and safety of pupils are priorities, for example, in lessons such as in food technology, and around the school during the current building modifications. Pupils' health is further promoted by the increasing range of healthy eating options at lunch-time. All staff demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring pupils feel secure and safe. This is effectively demonstrated in the number of pupils who sign up to be "bully blockers", and by the ease felt by Year 6 pupils, many of whom have joined the school recently from small rural schools. The relatively few pupils who have special educational needs are well-supported by the newly-appointed teacher assistants. The school has recently rearranged its provision for special educational needs, to ensure SEN pupils are taught more in lessons, with support.

Comments on the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are prominent in pupil profiles. These are completed twice-yearly, where teachers and pupils review the progress made and set targets for the future. Lessons often have planned opportunities where pupils are required to work together and develop, for example,

leadership skills that they will need in later life. The school challenges its pupils with moral and social dilemmas, for example in a Year 9 lesson on stereotypes, and through drama. Issues related to the more vulnerable, both within the school and within society generally, are sensitively handled. Pupils contribute significantly to the community and more widely, for example, through involvement in charities to support vulnerable young people overseas. Pupils value the school council which has been involved in significant school developments. The school has a clear idea of what constitutes good personal development, but although it is promoted well, pupils' personal development is not tracked as thoroughly or targeted as specifically as pupils' academic progress.

Grade: 2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good, with some particularly impressive aspects. The senior management team has a strong commitment to improving standards. The headteacher, in particular, provides very good leadership, combining vision with practical management skills. He promotes a caring and supportive ethos which is nonetheless self-critical and forward-looking. This is demonstrated in strategic planning which recognises areas of weakness, and combines aspirations for future improvement with detailed operational planning.

Quality assurance systems are very good. A rigorous departmental review system, introduced in 2003-04, is partly designed to spread the skills of self-evaluation. Building and refurbishment projects are carefully implemented. Performance Management for teaching staff is well-organised and links effectively to professional development. Departmental plans, whilst variable, are based on increasingly sharp use of data, and link improvement objectives to identified issues. The use of data to discuss achievement targets with individual pupils and then monitor their progress through years 8 and 9 is very good.

The school combines a determination to improve already high standards with an embedded care for all its pupils and their personal development. The strong equal opportunities ethos stems from the leadership of the school and this emphasis makes every pupil feel that they matter.

Financial management is sound and the school has been particularly successful in securing additional funding to support key projects, such as the money raised towards the new Debdale building. The governing body are committed to the school and conduct their business efficiently, maintaining links to departments. They are involved in planning and project management. The school acknowledges that it does not fully meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

Grade: 2

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