



North Bromsgrove High

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116928
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 283038
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Christopher Redman AI HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	School Drive
School category	Maintained		Stratford Road
Age range of pupils	13 to 18		Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 1BA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01527 872375
Number on roll	1039	Fax number	01527 839730
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr M Stephens
Date of previous inspection	27 January 2003	Headteacher	Mrs S Ballard

Age group 13 to 18	Inspection dates 30 November 2005 - 1 December 2005	Inspection number 283038
------------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

When North Bromsgrove High School was inspected in January 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on six occasions to monitor its progress and evidence from these inspections has been included in this report. The school was re-inspected by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors in November 2005.

Description of the school

North Bromsgrove High School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 18. The school serves a semi-rural area that includes families from a wide spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds. The great majority of the pupils are White British with the remainder representing several different cultural heritages and almost all speaking English fluently. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties is below average, but the number with statements of special educational need is typical for this size of school.

Since the school was inspected in January 2003, there has been a high turnover of staff including two changes of headteacher. The current headteacher assumed her post in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Over the past 15 months, the school has improved significantly. Outstanding leadership by two headteachers and determined work by the staff have led to improvements in teaching and learning so that they are now satisfactory. Standards are improving but in some subjects they are not high enough, particularly in mathematics. Behaviour has improved markedly and is now satisfactory.

The inspection of January 2003 required the school to address issues concerned with teaching, behaviour, leadership and management, financial management, the curriculum, the use of assessment, and the sixth form. Good progress has been made in most areas and there has been reasonable progress in the use of assessment to raise standards, but the quality of marking remains uneven.

The school is well placed to continue to improve. There is a strong emphasis on raising standards and a good understanding of how to secure better provision. The pupils' enjoyment of learning and the progress pupils make have improved in parallel with improvements in the quality of teaching. The school now offers sound value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

As the school's own evaluation shows, the sixth form's effectiveness is satisfactory. A-level results are broadly in line with the national averages. There has been some underachievement in the last two years largely associated with weak results in two subjects. However, in lessons students make satisfactory, and often good, progress. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers know their students well and regularly review their progress to help them stay on track. Marking of students' work is, however, not always regular or thorough enough. Students are offered a reasonable choice of advanced academic courses, but the curriculum is too narrow to be sufficiently attractive to more students. Not enough has yet been done to collaborate with other schools and colleges to provide a broader curriculum. The sixth form is broadly cost effective now that action has been taken to reduce the number of classes operating with small numbers of students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning in mathematics so that standards rise to the levels achieved in other subjects.
- Make the quality and effectiveness of marking more consistent across the school.
- Widen the range of the sixth form curriculum to cater for students of all abilities and interests.
- Ensure homework is regularly set and marked, and contributes effectively to improved learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are improving. Although the GCSE and Key Stage 3 national test results have been close to those found in schools nationally, they have not reflected the prior attainment of the pupils adequately. For example, in 2004 the Year 9 pupils achieved well in mathematics, broadly as expected in science, but, unsatisfactorily in English. The 2005 results were similar to the previous year except that pupils did not do as well in mathematics. In 2005 the Year 11 pupils achieved better GCSE results overall than in 2004 primarily because fewer pupils left with no passes but the proportion gaining 5 or more A* to C grades fell by 8% to 45%. Attainment in English was good, broadly satisfactory in science, but unsatisfactory in mathematics. Girls achieved markedly better results than boys. The pupils with learning difficulties made satisfactory progress.

At A level the results were mixed but close to average overall. In 2005, students achieved well in textiles, biology, chemistry and history. There was some underachievement, principally in business and social science courses. Student's progress in lessons is, however, now satisfactory and often good. Recently the pace of learning throughout the school has improved noticeably, the standard of the pupils' work is rising and their achievement has become satisfactory in most subjects, but not yet in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development has improved and is now satisfactory with good features. Most pupils are keen to learn and their behaviour in lessons has improved markedly. They listen well, collaborate willingly, and participate with enthusiasm. Improvements in the quality of teaching have resulted in pupils having more positive attitudes towards school. One pupil echoed the thoughts of her peers when saying, "The teachers are more prepared and that makes us want to work harder." Another said, "So much effort has been put into the school that everyone's attitude has changed." Attendance and punctuality continue to improve. At close to the national average the level of attendance is satisfactory. The great majority of pupils have well developed moral and social understanding. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.

Through its programme of personal, social and health education, the school places a strong emphasis on adopting safe practices and a healthy lifestyle. The willingness with which pupils heed this advice varies but is satisfactory overall. Older pupils value being given a range of responsibilities which help them to make a positive contribution to the school community. One such initiative is helping to combat bullying which is still perceived to be a problem by some parents. Pupils are positive that the situation is improving and feel safe within the school environment. Better opportunities for pupils to engage in discussion and work with their peers are helping to develop important interpersonal skills, which contribute to their future economic well-being.

The personal development of sixth formers is good. The sixth formers act as good role models for other pupils. They play a full and active role in supporting pupils in the rest of the school, such as through their work in paired reading and as prefects. They lead activities such as the work of the school council. Sixth formers are mature in discussion and debate, and show increasingly positive attitudes to learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and steadily improving. Through improved use of data, teachers understand what pupils are capable of achieving and are expecting more from them. The recently introduced system of challenging target grades is helping to motivate pupils. A strong whole school focus on the quality of teaching and learning has brought about significant improvements. This is reflected in a more consistent approach to lesson planning, a wider range of teaching styles, and improved opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and groups. The pace of learning in lessons is now satisfactory. The use of technical language by teachers and pupils has improved. A small proportion of teaching is, however, unsatisfactory, and some parents expressed concerns about this. The school is aware of the weaknesses and is taking steps to make improvements.

Throughout the school, the quality of marking is inconsistent. Although there are examples of helpful advice to pupils on how to improve, many books are not adequately marked. Similarly, the use and effectiveness of homework to support learning is not consistent, a concern shared by some parents.

Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students particularly value the individual support they get from their close working relationships with teachers who know them well. However, in some cases their written work is not marked well enough to develop their skills and levels of attainment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum for the main part of the school is satisfactory; it complies with national requirements, and offers a balanced range of courses to pupils including a wide range of vocational courses. Senior managers understand where further improvements are needed, for example, to improve the range of options for pupils in Years 10 and 11, to create more flexible provision for those pupils for whom a full academic programme is not appropriate, and improve the experiences for some pupils in vocational courses.

The extracurricular programme is strong with a wide range of clubs, activities and educational visits. The balance of sports, music and drama is a good feature of the programme and is appreciated by pupils.

The sixth form offers a satisfactory choice of advanced academic courses and students at the school are well satisfied with this provision. Retention rates on courses are good. However, the curriculum is too narrow to be sufficiently attractive to boost the numbers who join the sixth form. The school has taken some action to improve cost effectiveness by reducing the number of classes operating with small numbers of students. Until now though, it has not done enough to collaborate with other schools and colleges to extend its curriculum. Firm plans are in place to establish such partnership arrangements from 2006.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, advice and guidance for the pupils. Recent improvements to the systems for pastoral and academic guidance have helped pupils to become much more aware of their academic targets encouraging them to develop higher aspirations. Pupils feel that their teachers are supportive and helpful. The view of one pupil, echoed by others, is that, "Lots of teachers treat you with respect and, if you have a problem, they will take time to talk to you." Pupils are well aware of where to go for advice and guidance on personal and academic matters and with regard to their future education or careers.

The support provided by the school's special educational needs department and inclusion unit is particularly good. Sensitive attention is given to looked-after pupils and those experiencing personal and emotional difficulties. Well trained teaching assistants provide successful support within the classroom for pupils with learning difficulties. Effective liaison with outside agencies and feeder schools contributes to the good standard of care. Child protection procedures are well established.

Sixth formers are offered good support and guidance. Their progress against carefully set examination targets is monitored and reviewed regularly to help them stay on track. They have access to good quality guidance about their choice of sixth form courses and careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management have improved significantly and are now satisfactory. The previous headteacher, who led the school with great effectiveness from September 2004, helped to restore the teachers' self confidence and stimulate the proper debate about professional issues such as teaching, learning and behaviour. He improved communication between all levels of management bringing greater coherence to the school's actions. In the short time that the current headteacher has been in post she has provided a clear and appropriate vision for the school's further improvement, rigorously addressed areas of weakness, and improved communication with parents. Under her leadership the pace of improvement has increased. Leadership elsewhere in the school is improving but remains mixed. At its best it is perceptive, proactive and effective, but this desirable level has yet to be achieved with sufficient consistency

throughout the school. Leadership and management of the sixth form have improved and are now sound.

Strategic management is mostly good. The teachers and supporting adults have worked hard to improve their practice and implement more effective policies and procedures. Training and careful recruitment have considerably strengthened the expertise available to the school but some weaknesses remain, particularly in mathematics. The comprehensive systems for monitoring the school's work have led to a good understanding of what is done well and the areas that still require improvement.

Governance has improved significantly and is now good. Governors are well informed and monitor the school's work well asking pertinent questions that require the school to justify its actions. They have worked hard with the school to resolve the large budget deficit and have agreed a suitable recovery plan with the local authority. Financial management is now satisfactory.

While the majority of parents are satisfied with the school's provision, a significant minority expressed concerns, particularly relating to behaviour, standards and teaching in mathematics, and homework. Key strengths valued by parents are the positive working relationships with teachers, some excellent teaching, especially in English, art, drama and physical education, and the strong sense of care and concern for the pupils.

The local authority has supported the school well through careful advice, particularly about leadership and management, and effective monitoring.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

North Bromsgrove High School School Drive Stratford Road Bromsgrove B60 1BA

2 December 2005

Dear Students

You may remember that a team of inspectors visited your school recently to find out how good it was and how well you are doing. Thank you for being so friendly, telling us about your work, and what you think of the school. I am writing to let you know our judgements.

Your school has improved considerably over the past 15 months. As a result, it no longer requires special measures since it is providing you with an acceptable standard of education. You told us that you recognise the considerable efforts your teachers have made to improve the school and that your own attitudes to learning are much better, and we agree. Your teachers are involving you in lessons more effectively. Many of you are now behaving well and enjoy learning. The quality of teaching is much better than it was when I started to visit the school over two years ago. However, we have asked that the teaching in mathematics is improved where it is weak and that teachers give you more detailed advice when they mark your work. The standard of your work is much better. We believe you are capable of achieving good results in public tests and examinations if you try hard, do your homework, and pay careful attention to the advice from your teachers.

The quality of the sixth form is much better. You are offered a suitable range of A level courses but we have asked the school to broaden the curriculum so that those of you who wish to follow less academic subjects are catered for, either at North Bromsgrove High or elsewhere. You are lucky to have such a talented headteacher as Mrs Ballard. She is working hard with your teachers to ensure improvements to your school happen quickly and are sustained. Her predecessor, Mr Browne, also secured many improvements.

We enjoyed our two days with you. Your schooldays will always be an important part of your life. If you continue to set high targets and work hard to achieve them, you will play an important part in making your school even better than it is now.

Yours sincerely

C J Redman HM Inspector