

# BRIT School for Performing Arts and Technology

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101849
<b>Local Authority</b>	Croydon
<b>Inspection number</b>	286197
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Hornbrook 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>	City technology college
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	880
6th form	599
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Deacon CBE
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Nick Williams
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 November 2002
<b>School address</b>	60 The Crescent Croydon CR0 2HN
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8665 5242
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8665 8676

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<b>Age group</b>	14-19
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The BRIT School was established in 1991. It is funded directly by the government, with substantial support from the British Record Industry Trust (BRIT). While about 80% of students live within five miles, the school aims broadly to reflect the community of greater London. All students are committed to an aspect of performing arts and related technologies and many are gifted and talented. About two-thirds of the students are in the sixth form. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is below the national average. Although the percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is twice the national average, there are very few whose first language is not English. The number of students with special educational needs is below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The BRIT School is an outstanding provider of specialist education and training in the performing and visual arts and media. As one Year 11 parent commented, 'The school is unique - it provides opportunities not available elsewhere.'

The imaginative structure of the curriculum enables students to reach high standards in art and design, music, theatre, musical theatre, dance or media while, at the same, time receiving a broad general education. Selected for their commitment and aptitude, students follow their chosen arts 'strand' throughout their time in the school. This specialist focus is complemented in Years 10 and 11 by National Curriculum subjects, and in the sixth form by a programme of additional studies, mostly GCE A and AS level courses. The school is acutely conscious of the importance of getting the balance between specialist and general studies right and is constantly reviewing and making adjustments to reflect more accurately the needs of students.

Students make outstanding progress, particularly in their vocational strands. The impressive artistic and technical skills they acquire are matched by a highly developed moral, cultural and social awareness. They enjoy talking about their learning, articulate their views and ideas in a mature way and have a strong sense of self-worth. 'Success is being what you want to be,' said one, 'We feed off each others' energies'. Parents report that their children are happy and keen to attend because they enjoy learning and are inspired by the high quality teaching. In the view of the parent of one sixth form student, the BRIT School is, 'the best thing that's happened in his life.'

Teaching is stimulating and varied in style, and students are encouraged to experiment and take creative risks. Teachers know their students very well and devise activities to motivate and support them. Students and teachers are extremely hard working, combining large programmes with performance and extra-curricular activities, often initiating creative work of their own in their spare time. Students apply the techniques they have learned in real-life business or creative contexts; the school's radio station, Brit FM, is an example of this.

Leadership and management at all levels, from governors downwards, are outstanding, characterised by a commitment to very high professional standards, innovation and team working. All managers are clear about their priorities for improvement, one of which, for example, is to extend the use of digital media in all subjects. Much effort and resource has gone into strengthening the mathematics department where results in recent years have not matched those elsewhere in the school. In its role as a Leading Edge School, the BRIT School is busy in its support for the development of arts programmes in other local schools and community organisations.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

When they reach the end of Year 11, most students enrol in the sixth form, where they are joined by broadly twice that number from other schools. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Strand directors and other senior managers organise the curriculum very effectively to provide a secure but flexible framework within which students can do their very best. Sixth form teachers are constantly finding new ways of balancing and interweaving strands and additional studies, so that the broader curriculum not only enriches students' creative work but also supports other progression routes. The quality of teaching in

the sixth form is outstanding - according to one parent, 'inspirational' - and students make very impressive progress. The quality of care and pastoral support is also excellent, with teachers vigilant in the protection of students from external pressures to take work before they are ready.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement and standards in mathematics.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 1**

### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The students joining the school have levels of attainment that are well above average. They make outstanding progress in Years 10 and 11 so that in 2007 the school was among the very best in the country on this measure. Over 90% achieved the equivalent of five GCSEs at grades A\*-C in 2007. Students do very well in English, but historical weaknesses in mathematics mean that when these two subjects are included, GCSE results are closer to the national average. In 2007, all students gained a vocational arts first diploma in their chosen subject and some 80% achieved a distinction. Girls do slightly better than boys, but no group is significantly under-performing.

The progress made by students in the sixth form is exceptionally high; in a national pilot run by the Department for Children Schools and Families in 2007, the school was in the top 5% of schools and colleges. Retention rates are very high and 97% of students completing vocational arts diploma courses in 2007 achieved a merit or distinction grade, with the most impressive outcomes in dance, theatre and musical theatre. Because of the school's strong vocational emphasis, there are fewer entries for GCE A and AS levels than might otherwise be expected. Results in these examinations are slightly above average. The standards achieved by students in their performances are exceptionally high.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

In lessons, rehearsals and other activities, students are reflective about what they do and considerate of the thoughts and feelings of others. This was illustrated well in a moving assembly where students skilfully employed song, dance, poetry and drama to explore sexuality and AIDS related illness. Students' behaviour is exemplary and they are unfailingly courteous around the school. While some travel considerable distances each day, attendance is above average and exceptionally high in the sixth form. They enormously enjoy being at the BRIT School. One student said, 'At my last school students ran away - here we run towards school!' Students feel safe and cared for by the staff and they are conscientious in their observation of theatre and studio health and safety rules. Food served in the canteen conforms to healthy eating guidelines and students participate in physical education in Years 10 and 11; the school is working towards healthy school status. There is an active and effective school council and students become involved in a number of artistic ventures outside the school. In one project, students wrote and performed plays based on the wartime memories of the terminally ill in a local hospice. The curriculum's strong vocational emphasis means that students' economic awareness is highly

developed by the time they leave the sixth form. For example, Year 13 students on the technical theatre course take responsibility for the financial administration of all the school's productions.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that teaching and learning are outstanding overall, and at their very best in the sixth form. Teachers have extremely high expectations and successfully challenge students to achieve professional standards. Teaching and learning are characterised by high energy levels, an impressive quality of thoughtfulness and reflection, a strong focus on the needs of individual students, good use of technical language and the overwhelming commitment of both teachers and taught. Students enjoy their lessons, particularly those in their chosen arts strands, and praise their teachers who are often professional arts practitioners with impressive creative and technical backgrounds.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

With its core of vocational diplomas, the curriculum is finely tuned to the particular needs of BRIT School students. In Years 10 and 11, students have a good range of GCSE courses in both arts and non-arts subjects while the sixth form curriculum prepares students effectively for employment and further study in their chosen disciplines. At the same time, a flexible approach to timetabling allows creative projects to flourish. The school makes excellent use of successful past students, who provide professional input to strands as well as offering role models, and works hard to ensure that the curriculum actively promotes arts from a wide range of cultures. There are exceptional opportunities for students to enrich their studies through visits to galleries, performances and music studios. As well as taking their work to the Edinburgh Festival, groups of students have recently made visits to Berlin and New York.

### **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school has very robust procedures for ensuring that students fulfil their academic and creative potential. Tutors monitor students' overall progress and set and review targets; parents are invited to academic review meetings. In subjects, students receive very good feedback on their work and know what they have to do to improve. In Year 11, students receive comprehensive guidance on the choices open to them for further study, and alternatives are recommended for those wishing to follow a more academic post-16 programme than that offered at the BRIT School. In the sixth form, in addition to normal careers advice, students benefit from visits to industry workplaces. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive outstanding support; the parent of one student had 'nothing but praise for the help and encouragement' given by the school. There are effective systems for checking on absence, and informing parents promptly. The safeguarding of students' safety is given a high priority and there are suitable checks on the suitability of all adults who work with them.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The leadership and management of the principal and his leadership group are outstanding. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement informed by comprehensive performance information; the school's self-evaluation is detailed and, where necessary, self-critical, and the principles and practice of rigorous self-review extend into all operational areas. Heads of strand, heads of department and the leadership group all have a firm grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and of what needs to be done to make it better. Targets set by the school, such as those for attainment in mathematics, are challenging. Teachers are regularly observed and a rigorous programme of performance management is studiously linked to wide-ranging opportunities for continuing professional development. Experienced performing arts practitioners on the staff who do not have teaching qualifications are supported in acquiring qualified teacher status. The school's impressive commitment to equality of opportunity is reflected in its selection policy, its work in the local community and its achievement profile which shows that all groups of students do equally well. Governors carry out their duties assiduously and the experience and expertise they bring to the work of the school is a very considerable strength. As well as the contributions made by governors, successful and well-established partnerships with recording industry organisations, such as the British Phonographic Industry, Phonographic Performance Ltd. and EMI, greatly enhance the work experience of students. The school manages its resources very well and has excellent capacity for improvement.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of BRIT School for Performing Arts and Technology, Croydon, CR0 2HN

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we made about your school. We very much enjoyed meeting groups of you, talking to your teachers and visiting lessons. Your views are very important and helped us to understand your school. In the end, we thought that the BRIT School is providing you with an outstanding education.

- We were most impressed by the outstanding progress you make, particularly in the sixth form, and by your excellent results.
- We thought that you were creative, articulate and very hard-working.
- We thought that the care and guidance you receive is outstanding.
- We saw that your principal, his leadership team and the governors have a clear vision for the school.
- We thought that your teachers are very impressive and that the curriculum is very well organised to give you the best possible chances.
- We considered the school to be outstandingly well led and managed.
- We acknowledged that the links the school has with industry are a very significant strength.
- With so much exciting going on, we were not surprised that you enjoy coming to school!

To make it even more successful we think your school needs to make sure that:

- you do better in mathematics.

Thank you for taking part in the inspection, by talking to us about your work and your life in school. We were very impressed by your mature and reflective views.

David Hornbrook

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools