

# Benton Park School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108083
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	309593
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Tanya Harber Stuart 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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1429
6th form	260
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Robert Mirfield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs A Clarke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	Harrogate Road Rawdon Leeds West Yorkshire LS19 6LX
<b>Telephone number</b>	0113 2502330
<b>Fax number</b>	0113 2509177

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Benton Park is a much larger than average 11 to 18 comprehensive school, serving the north west of Leeds. The vast majority of the students are of White British heritage and very few students speak English as an additional language. About one eighth of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities which is below the national average. Few students come from economically disadvantaged homes and a much lower than average percentage receive free school meals. Fewer students than average join or leave the school other than aged 11 or 16 than nationally.

The school has many awards including Investors in People, Charter Mark, Inclusive Charter Mark, Artsmark Gold, International Status, Sportsmark and Healthy Schools Award. Benton Park is a specialist technology school and a Beacon School.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Benton Park School provides a satisfactory quality of education for its students; the quality of education they receive in the sixth form is good. These overarching judgements, however, reflect a broad range of factors. The school has a number of good and some outstanding features. The care and support it provides for its students is good and is outstanding in the sixth form. The leadership of the school are rightly proud of the developments in pastoral care and support to students, including some leading edge initiatives such as the student support centre. The standards that students attain are high, reflecting their above average levels of ability when they enter the school. However, given their ability, the progress they make as they move up through the school varies too much. It is outstanding in the sixth form, but is only satisfactory overall in the main school. Over the past three to four years students' progress has fluctuated, particularly in Key Stage 3. Their achievement in science by the end of Key Stage 3 has been significantly less than should be expected over the last three years. Given the importance of this subject as part of the school's specialist status as a technology college, this underachievement is significant. The leadership of the school recognises this, but has not been sufficiently successful in tackling the problem.

Students behave well; they are responsible, mature young people and treat each other with respect. They make positive contributions to the community through the school council and raising money for charity. The students have many links with a school in South Africa and have raised enough money to build a science laboratory for it. Teaching and learning overall are good. This is because teachers have good subject knowledge and this is particularly evident in sixth form lessons. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported by learning support assistants and make satisfactory academic progress in line with their peers.

The curriculum is good and meets all statutory requirements. It is matched to the needs of the students and has been enhanced through the specialist technology status of the school. The well planned work-related curriculum at Key Stage 4 has improved students' motivation.

Staff care for the students and the pastoral system is good. An efficient and effective programme, praised by parents, is in place to support students transferring from primary schools to Benton Park. The academic guidance for the students is not as strong. Recently the school has, quite rightly, focused on developing marking and assessment. The majority of staff are providing students with information about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. However, there is still considerable variation in practice which is hindering the students' progress.

The role of middle managers has developed and they are transforming from being solely managers of subjects to leading developments in teaching and learning. In the past there have been some areas of under-achievement. These are now being tackled. The whole school assessment and tracking system allows all staff to monitor student progress, and appropriate intervention strategies are in place and managed well. Nevertheless, the evaluation of initiatives can lack sufficiently clear focus in terms of their impact on student achievement.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The sixth form provides a very effective education for students who are capable of coping with Level 3 courses. Standards are above average both at AS and advanced level. Progress from

GCSE to advanced level is excellent. Those students who began their AS courses with lower GCSE grades have made particularly good progress recently. Achievement overall is outstanding.

Personal development is also outstanding. The most influential factor supporting achievement was rightly identified by students themselves as their work ethic. They fully accept the school's high behaviour expectations, and particularly enjoy the harmonious social atmosphere in the sixth form centre. They make a good contribution to the day to day effectiveness of the school - supporting in lessons, organising fundraising events, and coordinating the work of the student council. They also fully appreciate the opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle. These extremely positive attitudes to their work and personal development are supported by outstanding care, guidance and support. Students say that staff give 'incredible amounts of time' to support them. The constant emphasis on their current performance and how well this compares with their predicted grade is highly motivational, and helps to create a culture of achievement.

Almost all of the teaching in the sixth form is at least good. Teachers' thorough planning and obvious subject expertise give students the confidence to put their trust in them completely. Marking and feedback is very helpful. The level of challenge is consistently high and this, along with some imaginative approaches to teaching and learning, lead to high levels of student engagement. Leadership and management of the sixth form is good. The tutor team works extremely effectively. Strengths and weaknesses in the provision are recognised. There is a continuous programme of improvements to the good curriculum and aspects of teaching, and this has supported a steady improvement in standards and achievement. Capacity for further improvement is good.

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

- Improve students' achievement in science, especially at Key Stage 3.
- Develop the use of assessment and target setting throughout the school so all students make better progress and meet challenging targets.
- Ensure that improvement strategies both across the school and by individual departments are more sharply focused on student achievement and in measuring the progress towards those targets.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students enter the school with standards which are consistently above average and at the age of 16 reach standards significantly above the national average. However, given the students' ability when they enter the school, the high standards reached at the age of 16 represent only satisfactory progress for the vast majority of students. In 2007 standards fell significantly in English. The school recognised this and put in place appropriate strategies to raise attainment. The evidence seen at the time of the inspection showed these strategies are having a positive impact on student outcomes.

In 2007, age 14, students reached standards significantly above the national average in English, mathematics and science. In English and mathematics many students reached the highest

standards. However in science students did not reach the standards they were capable of and made significantly less progress than expected given their ability. The strategies put in place by the school to tackle this weakness are beginning to have an impact but the long legacy of underachievement will impact on the progress made by the students this year. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in lessons and in 2007 made satisfactory academic progress.

Progress in reaching the specialist targets is satisfactory in design and technology, were good in mathematics and unsatisfactory in science.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The personal development and well-being of students are good and the overwhelming majority of students treat each other with respect. This respect is the basis for the good working relationships between the staff and the students in the school. Students' moral and social development is good although their understanding of the multicultural society in which they live is less well developed. The provision for spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and is enhanced through the curriculum.

The vast majority of students enjoy school, which is shown by their above average attendance and good participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities including many trips abroad. All absence and lateness is quickly and efficiently followed up by a team of staff working closely with the relevant external agencies. The rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. The students are well supported by the pastoral staff and, because of this, most students feel safe. Students adopt healthy lifestyles as a result of the good advice they receive on health and emotional issues, and many of them participate in the wide range of sporting events. The students have raised considerable funds for charities, with many completing 'Race for Life'. The students also support a partner school in South Africa and fundraising activities include learning Sepedi. The successful work experience programme and visits to the school by companies mean the students are well prepared for life after school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Overall teaching and learning are good. However, this judgement masks the variability in teaching and learning across the school. At Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching and learning are generally good. They are less consistent at Key Stage 3 and result in students making less progress than expected, especially in science. Senior and middle managers are working hard to improve the consistency of teaching and learning across all subjects.

The best lessons are well planned and allow students to participate in a range of activities suited to their interests. In these lessons, staff share clear learning objectives with the students. Well planned paired and individual activities enable the students to take responsibility for their own learning. Good subject knowledge, capable classroom management and positive staff-student relationships by teachers mean students make good progress. The best lessons

are also based on thorough and accurate assessment which means the staff, and students, know their targets and what they have to do to improve. In the weaker lessons staff tend to talk too much and some students lose interest. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is now embedded in the school but the use of interactive whiteboards remains variable.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school's specialist status means the curriculum offers diverse, well adapted technological courses and good provision in ICT. The curriculum is thoughtfully planned and continuously revised. It meets all statutory requirements and there are numerous extra learning opportunities such as Latin. The timetabled personal, social and health education programme includes citizenship and is complemented by religious and philosophical education. The specialist status has promoted the development of a virtual learning environment, which is beginning to be used well by departments. Elsewhere, the carefully managed support ensures that students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are included in every aspect of provision. In Key Stage 4 students enjoy a flexible choice of academic, technological and vocational options, enhanced by links with local schools and colleges. These offer a close match with their preferences and post-16 aspirations. Students at risk of disaffection benefit from provision tailored to their needs, including work-related courses. Many students, including the most talented, benefit from the numerous extra-curricular activities complementing the timetabled curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The care and support for students provided by the school are good. So is some of the guidance that students receive to help them develop as more well rounded individuals and in planning their future careers. Form tutors know the students well and are fully aware of their pastoral needs. The effective pastoral system means form tutors work closely with middle and senior managers to support the students' personal and emotional needs well. The innovative student support centre provides good support for all students who need it, including the most vulnerable and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The work of the centre is enhanced by effective links with a wide range of external agencies, including support services and Connexions. Robust child protection systems are in place and safety checks on new staff comply with national standards.

Parents appreciate the good transition arrangements between primary schools and Benton Park. Good communications with primary schools, parents and students mean students are well supported at this time. The ethos of mutual respect in the school is epitomised by the good levels of care and respect for students from a local special school who are fully involved in all aspects of Benton school life.

However, the academic guidance provided for students is less well developed. The recently implemented whole school target setting and tracking system allows staff to monitor the progress of students against their targets, but students' progress against their targets is not sufficiently well analysed. There is too much variability in the quality of advice given to students about how to improve their work. The best marking tells the students what standard they have

reached, what they have done well and what they need to improve. However, some marking is cursory and does not help or guide the students.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school's leaders successfully promote the students' good personal development and effective standards of pastoral care. However, although self-evaluation systems are good and monitoring is thorough, the evaluation does not take sufficient account of student outcomes, particularly achievement levels, in focusing the improvement planning across the school.

The leadership skills of middle leaders are developing and there is a particular focus on extending their capacity to evaluate the work of their teams. Teamwork is becoming stronger. The confidence of middle managers is growing and they welcome opportunities to take responsibility. Good opportunities for professional development are linked to the school improvement plan as well as to the individual needs of staff. Development planning is detailed but the measures for evaluating success are not focused strongly enough on students' achievement. Teaching and learning are monitored thoroughly. Senior leaders are ensuring that teachers are becoming more accountable for the performance of students in their areas and there has been success in securing improvement in some areas. However, this has not yet led to sustained improvements in all subjects, particularly in science at Key Stage 3, where there is a recent history of underachievement. Governors are very supportive and some regularly visit the school, but they do not have a clear understanding of the progress made by the students or the standards being reached. They have not challenged leaders in the school sufficiently about the school's areas of weakness. All of these factors mean there is satisfactory capacity to improve.

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## 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?	3	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	1
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?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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>	3	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. The contributions you made to the inspection, both formally in meetings, and informally, were very helpful in forming a view of the school.

Benton Park provides you with a satisfactory standard of education, and a good education in the sixth form. The standards you reach in the 6th form are good. You make outstanding progress due to the good teaching and excellent care guidance and support the school provides. The standards you reach at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 are also good, but some of you are not reaching the very high standards you are capable of. This is particularly so in Key Stage 3 science. Staff are putting in place appropriate changes which mean you will have the opportunity to reach these standards. Teaching and learning are good. The great majority of you behave well and enjoy lessons especially when you are able to take responsibility for your learning. You told us you feel safe in school and that the rare incidents of bullying are dealt with efficiently and effectively. Your parents particularly appreciate the procedures in place to support you in moving from your primary schools to Benton Park.

We have asked the staff, to improve Benton Park further by:

- making sure you achieve higher standards in science, especially at Key Stage 3
- develop marking and target setting so you know, and understand, what you have to do to make better progress
- making sure any new strategies are focused on maximising your achievement and are evaluated to track progress.

You can contribute to these improvements by continuing to attend school regularly. You also need to follow the advice your teachers will be giving you about how to improve your work.