

Baverstock Foundation School and Specialist Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103547
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	331585
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	David Simpson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1305
Sixth form	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandra Howe
Headteacher	David Green
Date of previous school inspection	29 February 2008
School address	501 Bells Lane Druids Heath Birmingham B14 5TL
Telephone number	01214 307924
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Age group	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

Baverstock is a large secondary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, and the largest groups have specific or moderate learning difficulties. Baverstock is a specialist sports college. When the school was last inspected in February 2008 it was given a Notice to Improve.

At the time of the inspection, pupils in Years 11 to 13 were absent from school on study leave or sitting examinations. Consequently there was not enough evidence to reach judgements on several aspects of the sixth form: personal development and well-being, the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and the care, guidance and support provided for pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Baverstock has made significant progress since the last inspection and is now providing a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils. The school is guided by a strong ethos based upon seeking to provide an excellent education for each individual, and aims to be a school which serves its community, promotes young people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities, and provides a challenging and caring environment for young people. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Pupils enter the school with below average attainment and now make satisfactory progress across their school career to reach below average standards in examinations at the end of Years 11 and 13. The school has had a history of underachievement, and strategies to ensure middle-ability pupils fulfil their potential remain a priority. Increasingly challenging targets over the next two years are aimed initially at bringing pupils' performance in line with national figures for achievement, and then exceeding the progress made by pupils in similar schools. Inspection evidence confirms that progress is accelerating in line with these targets. Teaching is now satisfactory; it is informed by thorough planning, and is addressing the needs of individuals better than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils respond well when they are encouraged to demonstrate their learning and understanding. Where lessons are less effective, however, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge and pupils do not engage fully with their learning or are insufficiently motivated to make good progress. The school tracks pupils' progress thoroughly, but teachers do not use the resulting information consistently well to provide individual guidance in lessons. The curriculum meets the pupils' needs well, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and includes a range of appropriate vocational courses and opportunities to work in the local community through work experience. At Key Stage 3 significant steps are being taken to improve provision to better meet pupils' needs, for example the introduction of a 'learning to learn' course which tackles weaknesses in pupils' literacy and learning skills.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, but with some clear strengths. They make a good contribution to the local community and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. However, whilst attendance is improving it remains below average and the school is aware that this is a priority for improvement. Whilst the vast majority of pupils enjoy their education, too many receive fixed-term exclusions. Staff play a very positive role in monitoring the care, guidance and support of pupils, but have not yet succeeded in overcoming persistent absenteeism.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Well-focused actions have been taken to address the issues arising from the previous inspection report and self-evaluation is generally good, ensuring that the school has a good capacity to improve further. For example, middle and senior leaders are increasingly involved in accurate monitoring, and there is a developing emphasis upon improving teaching to promote effective learning. Governors are playing an increasingly robust part in challenging the school's performance. The school contributes well to community cohesion through a good knowledge of local needs and the effective promotion of pupils' awareness of, and respect for, different communities and views, both nationally and internationally. Specialist sports status has been used well to strengthen young people's opportunities to play a significant part in the local community, develop the curriculum, including access to information and communication technology, and improve their learning through

supporting leadership in subjects such as science. Partnerships with others to promote learners' well-being are good and the school plays a pivotal role in leading local extended services and sports partnership activities.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory education. Pupils enter the sixth form with below average attainment compared to pupils pursuing similar qualifications nationally. Pupils have the opportunity to study a wide range of advanced qualifications and the school is increasingly successful in offering suitable courses for those who are not yet ready for the challenge of these qualifications when they join the sixth form. A commendable proportion of pupils progress from intermediate to higher academic and vocational qualifications as a result. The school is aware that it has not yet done enough to improve the attendance of those pupils who are not in receipt of an educational maintenance allowance. Surveys of pupils' views demonstrate that they appreciate the quality of teaching they receive and enjoy their education. The leadership and management of the sixth form are well integrated into the school's monitoring procedures, but the school acknowledges that it is not yet sufficiently effective in ensuring that pupils are guided into making appropriate course choices in order to improve completion rates.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further improve teaching so that it meets the needs of individual pupils, especially those of middle-ability, consistently well.
- Raise attendance to at least national averages.
- Further reduce the number of pupils who are excluded from the school.

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

Pupils increasingly enter the school with standards that are below average. In the 2008 GCSE examinations, 47% of pupils achieved five or more A* to C grades and 29% achieved five or more A* to C grades that included English and mathematics. These results were significantly below national averages. The school has introduced a range of strategies to address the situation, including further developing the tracking of pupils' progress, targeted intervention for pupils who need additional support and the quality of teaching and learning. This has resulted in Year 11 pupils being on track to achieve their targets and in some cases exceed them. For these pupils achievement is satisfactory. The specialist status has had a significant impact on raising standards. Pupils who follow the GCSE physical education course have for the past two years achieved well, and the proportion attaining A* to C grades was above the national average. Pupils in Year 7 entering the school with low reading ages have made significant improvement as a result of intervention so that they achieve and in some cases exceed challenging targets. Some middle-ability pupils, however, do not yet achieve as well as they can. Focused support for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs and those with moderate learning and behaviour difficulties means that these pupils achieve in line with their peers. Attainment on entry to Level 3 courses in the sixth form is below average. Pupils make satisfactory progress, although examination results remain below average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are good. Issues are handled sensitively to support independent thinking and raise pupils' aspirations; good examples were seen within religious studies, a year group assembly and the 'Golden Key' awards. The cultural development of pupils is a particular strength. Pupil exchange visits, cross-curricular work and fund raising events benefit the community locally, nationally and internationally. Pupils enjoy school and show respect for each other.

Some parents expressed concerns about homework and pupils' behaviour. The school is seeking to provide a framework for out-of-hours learning which is more constructive in helping pupils with their learning and research. The inspection found that when teaching was insufficiently challenging and the pupils were not stimulated enough, inappropriate behaviour by a small number of pupils hindered the progress for others in the group. However, pupils' behaviour was good in lessons where teachers had high expectations, pupils were well motivated and a variety of teaching styles were used. Conduct around the school too was mature and thoughtful, including in areas that become congested during change-over of lessons. Fixed-term exclusions have decreased significantly but are still above average. The school has yet to evaluate the impact of the internal exclusion room. Initiatives aimed at improving attendance are having a positive impact for the majority of pupils, but a significant minority of persistent absentees have meant that overall school attendance falls below the national average.

Pupils value the 'pupil voice' and feel their views are listened to and respected. Their own personal development is enhanced by the areas of responsibility taken on by the head boy and girl, pupil librarians, peer mentors and the 'Baver buddies' who support the transition process. Pupils feel safe and well cared for and say they can approach any member of staff at any time. Specialist provision such as the 'quit smoking' and 'fit4life' bespoke programmes enhance the life chances and well-being for a range of pupils. Participation in physical activities beyond the school day is particularly good. The pupils develop satisfactory workplace skills. They participate in work experience and a range of activities which adequately contribute to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning ranges from outstanding to inadequate. The school's strategies to raise the standards of teaching are leading to improvement but they are not consistently applied by all teachers. The 'learning to learn' programme in Year 7 and Year 8 is effective in addressing the basic learning needs of pupils on entry to the school. The best lessons feature good subject knowledge and the use of questioning techniques which go beyond checking pupils' understanding. For example, in an outstanding religious education lesson pupils had to use higher level thinking skills to explore the nature of the soul. Lessons are often well planned and well paced but where they are less than good teachers' expectations are low and the content and tasks are insufficiently challenging. Pupils are able to work well together, particularly in group work where they are given roles and responsibilities. However, there are missed opportunities for independent learning with the result that pupils can become passive and unresponsive. Inadequate teaching results from poor classroom management and failing

to recognise the learning needs of the pupils, and this leads to disengagement, disruptive behaviour and poor learning. These lessons do not consistently address the pupils' different needs in practice, even though they may be clearly identified in lesson plans. Assessment and marking are helpful in tracking pupils' progress and what is expected at each level or grade, but do not always indicate to pupils clearly enough what they must do to improve. Peer assessment and pupil target setting usefully support pupils in taking responsibility for their own learning and progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is a strength of the school: it offers a great deal of choice, and is inclusive and responsive to the learning needs of all the pupils. The curriculum has been developed carefully to provide appropriate opportunities for different groups of pupils. In the 14 to 19 age group, vocational pathways have been opened up and off-site training is provided in collaboration with other providers. The Prince's Trust XL programme is popular, relevant and challenging for the pupils involved. All Year 10 pupils have gained the Bronze Award. Specialist status has not only benefited the school with extra resources, but the expertise developed in the subject is also being shared with all departments, for example in the introduction of vocational courses, as well as curriculum enrichment and extension. The school is aware of weaknesses and areas for development, particularly in science and numeracy, and these are being successfully addressed. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, much praised by the pupils themselves, and the level of uptake is high.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are robust and regularly reviewed. Staff care about the welfare of their pupils and a range of procedures are in place to promote a healthy lifestyle. Child protection procedures are clear and widely understood. Pupils said they felt safe at school and are clear about who they would talk to if they wanted to discuss personal problems. They report that the school takes bullying seriously and are confident with the way issues are dealt with. There is a systematic approach to identifying and tracking the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the school building is now accessible to those pupils and parents with physical disabilities. Specialist anger management, self-esteem and young carers groups are among the elements of provision which help pupils. Systems to support the gifted and talented pupils and the guidance for pupils to choose relevant GCSE courses are good. Pupils benefit from the additional support provided by a range of external agencies, and the provision of effective early intervention is a core aspiration of the support the school provides. Whilst academic targets are set for all pupils, the guidance that the pupils receive on what they need to do to achieve these targets is not consistently helpful. Advice and 'tips' are incorporated into the marking of pupils' work, but are sometimes not followed up by either the pupil or teacher. The school does not use its attendance data sufficiently robustly to challenge absence. Actions to address exclusions are reducing the numbers of pupils who are excluded, although these figures remain too high.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school evaluates its own performance well, and this has enabled the headteacher and enthusiastic senior leadership team to focus their efforts effectively on raising standards. Good systems are in place to monitor the work of the school, although these are not always focused on the impact of the work on pupils' learning. For example, the school does not effectively analyse attendance data in order to challenge and reduce absences. The school's improvement plan in most cases sets out measurable success criteria that will allow senior leaders and governors to evaluate the impact of any changes over time, although in some cases it is difficult to be clear about how the impact of actions will be measured.

This is an inclusive school and a variety of established systems exist to support pupils. The school has introduced a more strategic approach to developing its contribution to promoting good community cohesion. Specialist school status is effectively led and is having a positive impact on the school. Professional development activities are increasingly effective in developing the capacity of all staff. In particular, this has improved the quality of work of middle leaders, who now play a pivotal role in monitoring and tracking pupils' progress. The effective governors hold the school to account and in so doing provide appropriate challenge while being supportive to the staff and the school as a whole. They play an active part in the life of the school. They have effectively addressed the issues from the previous report, including the access to the buildings for all pupils.

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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?	3	3
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	2	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3	

¹Grade 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.

²IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	IE ²
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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	IE 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?	3	IE ²

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
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	2	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Baverstock Foundation School and Specialist Sports College, Birmingham, B14 5TL

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and helping us to find our way around. We enjoyed our meetings and conversations with you, and they informed our inspection judgements.

Your school has improved considerably since we last inspected you, and is now providing you with a satisfactory overall education. The quality of teaching is improving and the curriculum is now particularly good in terms of the choice of activities it includes, especially for those of you in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. You are making better progress in your lessons and do particularly well when asked to take responsibility for learning, respond to challenging questions and work with one another to provide solutions or evaluate one another's work. However, these are not yet consistent features of your lessons. Some aspects of your personal development are impressive, such as your fund raising to help young people in Zambia and to support the work of UNICEF. Similarly, through your specialist sports status you have many opportunities to show leadership skills in the local community.

The headteacher and staff are keen to ensure that the school continues to improve. We think the key to this is for you to make better progress in your lessons, so we have asked your teachers to make sure that your lessons always challenge each and every one of you to do as well as possible. You will be pleased to know that we think you too can make a significant contribution to making your school even better, by:

- attending regularly so that you get the most out of your education
- ensuring that your behaviour does not prevent you from attending school.

Thank you again for being so helpful, and we wish you every success in the future.

David Simpson

Her Majesty's Inspector