

South Bromsgrove Community High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116929
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312449
Inspection dates	21 - 22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	13 - 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1301
6 th form	311
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Hill
Headteacher	Mr Paul Copeland
Date of previous school inspection	9 - 12 February 2004
School address	Charford Road Bromsgrove Worcestershire B60 3NL
Telephone number	01527 831783
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Age group	13-19
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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

In this large upper school, almost all students are from White British backgrounds. Almost all have English as their first language. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Whilst the proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is average, the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Measures of socio-economic deprivation indicate a relatively favourable context. The school has both Technology and Language Specialist status. It occupies a new building, which opened in the summer of 2007, funded by a private finance initiative.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

South Bromsgrove High School is a good school where students very much enjoy learning. They make good progress academically and achieve outstanding personal development. This is because of the extensive additional enrichment activities followed by most students, as well as a good range of academic subjects. These are taught well by specialist teachers, who are supported by effective classroom assistants and administrative staff. A key strength of the school is the close partnership between teaching and support staff. They are both fully committed to the very effective extra curricula programme that majors on the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. The impact of the Technology Specialist College status is evident in excellent information and communication technology (ICT) provision that is in widespread use by teachers and students. The recent addition of Language Specialist College status is leading to the provision of a wider range of subjects and this faculty has a state-of-the-art language laboratory that is expertly used to improve students' engagement.

Students of all ages are exceptionally well cared for and supported. Vulnerable learners, including those looked after by the local authority, are treasured by skilled support and teaching staff, and as a result feel part of the school community. Students play an active role in school decision-making, with large numbers of students taking on responsible roles, both within the school and with their middle school partners. The arrangements with external agencies and local businesses are exceptionally strong and effective in giving students extensive opportunities and access to real world settings.

The complexities of moving into new buildings have been successfully achieved without a discernable impact on academic standards. Leadership and management is good. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. However, the school has been too generous in its self-evaluation, because it had not grounded some of the judgments securely enough in the outcomes for learners, particularly in relation to achievement and standards.

Effective teaching ensures almost all students make good progress academically. There are some occasions where outstanding teaching leads to outstanding learning for students, and inspectors saw examples of these high quality lessons. The majority of books are marked regularly. Some are marked very well indeed with clear assessment of quality. These give detailed information to students on the steps they should take to improve further but this is not done consistently enough. Lesson plans set out the aims and the activities to be carried out, but most of these written plans contain no explicitly different tasks for students of differing abilities and prior knowledge.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is good, with some outstanding features. Almost all students complete the courses they start, with 80% of them proceeding straight onto higher education.

Academic standards are broadly in line with the national average for most of the subjects studied. By the end of Year 13, students have made good progress towards a successful future, not the least because their personal development is outstanding. Half of them are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award. Students are confident, articulate and have well-developed social skills. They also make an outstanding contribution through community service activities. Workplace skills are also well developed through effective work shadowing, work experience and enterprise activities. There are established procedures to review progress in the sixth form but there has been insufficient analysis of data against national trends.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure marking consistently informs students about what they need to do to improve.
- Use students' performance data and teachers' own assessments of students' prior knowledge more effectively to ensure lesson planning is always matched well to students' needs.
- Connect the evaluation of provision with its impact on students' outcomes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards of students in national tests and examinations at Key Stages 3 and 4 are above average. They have remained so over recent years and represent good achievement for students overall. The attainment of students when they took Key Stage 2 tests in their middle schools has been just above the national averages, and in some years more so than others. However, the gap between national and school standards at Key Stage 4 has reduced as the national averages have risen over time, leading to lower value added measures compared with three years ago. Some of the reasons for this have been identified by the school, in relation to weaker performance than expected in a few subjects in 2007. All groups of learners achieve equally well, with clear evidence of good progress for individual vulnerable learners, thanks to careful and well managed attention to their learning needs.

Sixth form standards are broadly average, compared to national figures, on a subject-by-subject basis, both for GCE AS level and full A levels. The school has an unusually high number of entries per student which gives it a high exam points score per student. The school introduced additional support for students in the light of 2006 results and there are early signs of its impact on the AS results in 2007, which are noticeably better than in 2006. Students in sixth form achieve well, when compared to their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of students of all ages are outstanding. Social, spiritual, moral and cultural development is outstanding because its delivery is securely embedded in lessons for citizenship and personal skills. Students respond in an open-minded way to new ideas and are culturally aware.

The promotion of healthy lifestyles is also outstanding. A high percentage of students take part in sporting and extra-curricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Nearly all students in Year 10 participate in the bronze award. Almost all students have a high level of concern for the safety and well-being of others, with the result that there is very little disruption to learning or anti-social conduct. A small number of parents express concern that some teachers cannot manage some poor behaviour. There are very few incidences of bullying, but when these do occur, they are investigated and resolved quickly and effectively. The school has effective strategies in place for attendance, which has risen significantly, and exclusions, which have dramatically reduced over the last three years.

Students enjoy coming to school and are willing to learn. A headteacher from one of the local middle schools commented on how the students are great ambassadors for the school. The students develop a good appreciation of skills and attributes for success in the workplace through effective work experience and Young Enterprise programmes. They embrace many opportunities, such as in DoE activities and sports leadership, to work in teams and develop their leadership skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall for all year groups, including the sixth form, with all the lessons seen being satisfactory or better. Almost all lessons are characterised by excellent relationships between teacher and students, which permit easy and animated exchanges and discussions. Inspectors saw some outstanding practice, for example, in an ICT lesson in Year 10. Here, relevant and interesting content helped students to focus intently on the task, which was correctly pitched according to the different abilities of the students. In another example, a psychology lesson required students to use very good study skills that were even further developed by this lesson. Resources were stimulating and varied, and the high level and demand on students ensured very good progress. Most lessons make use of the excellent ICT provision in some way that includes presentation of multi-media material, or student internet research.

Two particular aspects of teaching are inconsistent. First, despite the recognition in some lesson plans that students span a wide range of ability, these plans do not always set out to target tasks that match those varying abilities. Second, marking practice varies from excellent in some classes, to very cursory in a few. The best practice gives clear written advice on what students should do to improve, based on accurate assessment of their current understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced, offering opportunities to study technology and at least one preferred language to GCSE. All students take a humanities subject within the extended core curriculum and in Year 9 they study two languages from French, German or Spanish. Good opportunities are provided to take a range of further languages, including Latin, both in and out of school time.

This highly academic curriculum results in most students taking 11 GCSEs. The arts curriculum is outstanding and the school has been awarded the Artsmark Gold three times. There is a limited choice of vocational subjects, but they have proved successful for the very small numbers of students taking them, such as in hospitality. Less academic students take fewer GCSEs rather than following a vocational route. This is an area for development for the school, although there is very good provision for vulnerable and underachieving students, who are supported well by 'study skills'.

The curriculum is well supported by excellent resources, enabled through funding made possible by the school's specialist status. There are superb electronic media used in language teaching, music and business studies, and in technology itself. These have enabled teachers to employ the most contemporary of methods and strategies, such as in Spanish, where independent learning has been fostered through individualised programmes.

The sixth form curriculum is good. There is a particularly wide choice of A-level courses. The range of vocational opportunities is narrower, although four new BTEC courses have recently been offered. Nevertheless, students have good access to local colleges for the vocational courses not available at the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided for learners are outstanding. Students are safe, supported and well cared for, both in school and during activities out of school. The pastoral team works with an increasing number of adults to safeguard the welfare and well-being of the students very well. It provides extensive and effective care for vulnerable young people with great success and parents express their appreciation of this. There is an excellent system for the setting of appropriate targets and the tracking of students' progress. Procedures to identify pupils who are at risk or in need of additional support are extremely effective.

The Brookside centre is very successful in supporting students who find it difficult to cope with whole class learning, and has kept students within the school environment. Good provision is made for pupils with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities and records show that they make good progress. The transition from Year 8 in the middle school to Year 9 in the high school is very effective and well managed, receiving praise from parents, students and the partner schools. The guidance sixth formers receive through the academic monitoring procedures is very good. Students who are underachieving are identified and mentored very successfully.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership and direction. There is a good commitment to school improvement by the senior leadership team, which disseminates this message well. The senior team, the governing body and middle leaders recognise that students' standards have not improved sufficiently over a period of time, despite remaining above average.

The school has been generous in its judgement of standards, achievement and the quality of teaching. These are good, but not yet outstanding. The process of setting targets is secure and there is abundant data to track students' progress. However, the school is not yet meeting some of its own challenging targets, because of some inconsistencies in planning and marking. Senior and middle leaders are committed to the personal development and well-being of all learners. Middle leaders have good knowledge of the quality and standards in their faculty areas, but do not always ensure that all teachers use data effectively to diagnose and address areas of weakness.

The school is inclusive in its outstanding support for the students with learning difficulties and those who are vulnerable. Many and varied links with external stakeholders are effective in improving provision for students and a range of adults is deployed well to support students effectively. Improvements in accommodation and resources, the latter due to the school's good financial management, have helped increase students' pride in their school. The specialist status targets have been met in the school's community work but the academic targets have yet to be all achieved. Governors are aware of the school's performance and are kept well informed by a comprehensive ICT management information system.

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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?	2	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?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage		
The effectiveness of boarding provision		
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

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	1	
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	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	1	1

¹ 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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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



23 November 2007

Dear Students

**Inspection of South Bromsgrove Community High School, Bromsgrove,
Worcestershire, B60 3NL**

Thank you for your friendly welcome and positive contributions to the inspectors during our visit. Your school is providing you with a good quality all-round education that will serve you well in your future. We noted the wide range of choices available, particularly for GCSE subjects. We also think that the additional opportunities to develop your personal skills are outstanding. The Duke of Edinburgh scheme is the major contributor, but we also think the additional opportunities in the arts and sports are excellent. The impact of this rich provision shows in your very positive contributions to the school and its wider community. The commitment of teaching and support staff in ensuring your success is second to none. The collaboration and cooperation of teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff is excellent. There is much to celebrate.

The new school buildings are quite amazing and you are fortunate to be able to enjoy such excellent resources. The school has managed to provide additional ICT systems, which give you excellent access to learning materials and are enhancing your teaching. We saw predominantly good teaching, and agree with you that the school is a safe and lively place in which to learn.

There are three things that could help the school become as outstanding as it intends to be. First, all teachers should give you regular written advice on how to improve your work when they mark it. Many already do this as a matter of course. Second, lessons should be more explicitly planned to meet the range of abilities and previous knowledge that you have. Finally, the school needs to balance its own judgement of overall quality by taking as much account of your academic progress as the range of resources and activities it provides

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Cartwright', written over a faint, illegible background.

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector