

Bishop Stopford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122095
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314214
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Rashida Sharif HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1080
6th form	391
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ron Whittaker
Headteacher	Margaret Holman
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
School address	Headlands Kettering NN15 6BJ
Telephone number	01536 503503
Fax number	01536 503217

Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement; the use of assessment to support learning; the sharing of best practice in teaching; and the role of the middle managers. Inspectors collected evidence from lesson observations, assessment data, documentation and meetings with key staff, governors and students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Bishop Stopford is an oversubscribed school. It serves an area which is mostly socially and economically advantaged. It is larger than average in size and gained specialist status in technology in 1993. Students are mainly White British, with nearly 7% from minority ethnic groups, all of whom speak English fluently. The proportion of students identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is growing, although it remains below the national average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average.

The school has achieved a number of quality marks, for example the Healthy Schools Gold award, and awards for art, sport and information and communication technology (ICT). The school has also been successful in being awarded the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

There are many impressive features that combine to make this an outstanding school that gives excellent value for money. The school knows itself well and is rightly proud of its success. Parents praise the school, as do students, who are very proud to be part of the caring and learning community. One parent said, 'I feel that Bishop Stopford is more than a school. It is a community where each child matters.' The students on the school council echoed what other students said. They stressed that they are 'valued as individuals, rewarded for their efforts and achievements' and supported through excellent pastoral care to achieve their best.

Students' performance in the core subjects at Key Stage 3, in all subjects at GCSE and at advanced level is well above the national average and this represents outstanding achievement in relation to students' starting points. This success is a credit to the students, who have excellent attitudes, behaviour and a desire to do well in everything they do. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make outstanding progress because of the support they receive. The small but growing number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds make equivalent progress to all other students. The headteacher and her leadership team have worked tirelessly to identify and meet the specific needs of their students. Systems for monitoring the school's performance and evaluating its progress are very effective. The targets set are challenging and the school is well placed to meet them.

Students are very polite, friendly and have very positive attitudes to their learning. Their tremendous enjoyment of school is reflected in their exceptional attendance rate. Behaviour and attitudes in lessons and around the school are exemplary. Students appreciate the systems of rewards and sanctions and say that these have played a major role in helping them achieve as well as they do. Students feel that bullying, particularly 'cyber bullying', is rare. They feel very safe at school and believe that if they had any problems, they would know who to go to for help. They feel that their suggestions and opinions are listened to and acted upon. For example, the students' council successfully requested water fountains around the school and more affordable and healthier lunches.

The senior team and staff share a commitment to the school and give their time generously. This is evident in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities, which are attended by the majority of the students. As some of the students on the school council pointed out, 'We only have to ask and it's done.' The students are guided very well towards healthy lifestyles. The school's healthy school gold award, its growing breakfast club and its effective physical education provision are testament to its commitment to ensuring that its students are healthy and fit. Students' contribution to the school and wider community is also notable. The students are not at all shy in telling visitors about the developments that they have been involved in and are proud, for example, of their work as mentors to students who may need help either personally or academically.

The students' personal development and well-being, and the care, guidance and support provided for them, are outstanding. Students are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences in the school. As one parent said, 'My child goes to school with a smile on his face and comes back happy. I feel that this is a true reflection of the school's overall performance aside from its excellent results.' Students are overwhelmingly positive, particularly about the way in which their specific needs are identified and barriers to their progress are tackled.

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with many outstanding features. The teachers have good subject knowledge. They set high aspirations for students and generally, there is a strong focus in lessons on helping students improve their work and meet individual targets so that they can achieve the next level in their work. Lessons are well planned and usually have a brisk pace. The very best lessons make use of a range of strategies, such as effective questioning and group work, and assess students' understanding. As a result, teaching in these lessons stretches students of all abilities. Some teachers capitalised on the students' positive attitudes to enable them to work in partnership with them towards a common goal. However, there are some lessons where teachers talk too much so that students do not have sufficient involvement or time to consolidate their learning. Although the tracking and monitoring of students' academic progress are good, marking in books lacks consistency and coherence. The marking does not always tell the students what they need to do to further improve their work.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and flexible. Its flexibility ensures that the individual needs of all students are met. For example, the logistics course enables students who were not flourishing on more traditional courses to achieve their potential. Recent successful initiatives in ICT and design and technology reflect the school's areas of specialism well. All subjects and teachers now benefit from the improved provision and use of a range of facilities that have resulted from these specialisms. The range of cultural and sporting extra-curricular opportunities is particularly impressive. The school is currently developing a range of vocational courses to meet the changing needs of its students. Students are supported and guided very well by all staff. There are very good induction procedures in place to ensure that all students in Year 7 settle in quickly, as do Year 12 into the sixth form. The arrangements for safeguarding students are excellent. The school follows very good procedures for the protection of children through working very closely with other agencies and monitors health and safety issues diligently.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides strong leadership and sets a clear educational direction. She is very well supported by a committed and highly effective senior leadership team and an excellent governing body, all of whom share the same vision. The vision underpinning the school's leadership is based on the five principles of faith, justice, responsibility, truth and compassion. All that the school does is focused on providing the best for all students to support their personal and academic progress. The school has made continuous improvement since its last inspection. Governors hold the school to account very effectively and know its strengths and weaknesses. The governors bring with them a wealth of experience, which they use very effectively by serving on the different committees. The school is aware of the need to further strengthen the role of all middle leaders to enable them to ensure consistency in their monitoring and evaluation of provision in their areas of responsibility. It also recognises that this is a means through which best practice in teaching can be more effectively shared. This is also an opportunity for the school to capitalise on its internal debate about teaching and learning styles.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Sixth form provision is outstanding, as is its leadership and management. Students enter the sixth form with attainment which is above average and make outstanding progress, which results in very high standards in examinations. There is an excellent range of courses on offer that is continuously being added to, so that the changing needs of students are met. The vast majority of students stay on in the sixth form, and almost all go on to higher education. There are a growing number of students who apply successfully to join the sixth form from other

schools each year. These students receive a very effective induction so that they settle quickly and make outstanding progress. Students value the support they receive from the sixth form team, particularly the one-to-one mentoring. They say that teaching methods and the way in which they are encouraged to use their initiative and take responsible roles within the community prepare them well for university study.

Students enjoy their studies and take up significant roles of responsibility in the rest of the school, willingly giving of their time to mentor younger students and help with a range of clubs and activities both during and after school. Teaching and learning are good, with many outstanding features. The very good relationships established between the students and teachers, coupled with the mature attitude of students, enable them to flourish. Students willingly take responsibility for their own learning. There are rigorous systems in place for reviewing students' progress which ensure that early support is provided for those who need it, particularly the growing numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers always fully involve students in lessons and provide clear guidance through marking to help students to improve their performance.
- Strengthen the roles of middle leaders to enable them to be more effective in monitoring and evaluating provision in their areas.

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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?	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 ¹ 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	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	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?	2	2
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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
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	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

28 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishop Stopford School, Kettering NN15 6BJ

Thank you very much for the very warm welcome you extended to my colleague and me when we visited your school. It is a delight to write to you and to tell you that we found your school to be outstanding. We would like to particularly thank the members of the school council and the sixth form forum for giving up their lunchtime to speak with us. We also spoke with many of you around the school throughout the day we were with you.

You have extremely positive attitudes to learning. It is because of these positive attitudes and your hard work and determination, as well as because of what your school does, that you achieve such high standards. You are taught well and you appreciate your teachers and their knowledge and enjoyment of their subjects. You have a wonderful opportunity to study a wide variety of subjects and pursue additional interest in the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. You make a very good contribution to the school community through taking on responsibilities, for example as mentors in the sixth form who play an extremely important role in helping the younger students.

Many of you and your parents told us that you feel the school is like a 'community where each child matters.' We had a tremendously positive response to the questionnaire from your parents, so please pass on my thanks to them.

In discussion with the headteacher, the senior leadership team and a representative from the governing body, I have asked the school to:

- turn the good teaching into outstanding teaching by making sure that you are always actively involved in lessons and that marking tells you how to improve your work; we are fascinated by your school's current debate about sharing good practice to improve the teaching further
- strengthen the roles of middle leaders to enable them to be more effective in monitoring and evaluating provision in their areas.

You can help your school by continuing to work as hard as you are doing. I look forward to hearing about your future success.

Rashida Sharif Her Majesty's Inspector

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