

The Nottingham Bluecoat School and Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122894
Local Authority	Nottingham City
Inspection number	359327
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Smith 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1829
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ronnie Ogier
Headteacher	Sian Hampton
Date of previous school inspection	20 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They visited 52 lessons or parts of lessons and observed 50 teachers. They held meetings with staff, pupils, and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, interrogated the school's assessment records and looked at the minutes of the meetings of the governing body, aspects of community work, the minutes of meetings with the School Improvement Partner and school action plans and evaluations. They also scrutinised 174 parent and carer questionnaires, 31 staff questionnaires and 221 student questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which the dip in performance at Key Stage 4 in 2010 is a blip or the start of a downward trend.
- How effective leaders, at all levels, have been in improving the provision and raising standards across all years, including the sixth-form.
- How effective the sixth-form is at building upon the success of students after Key Stage 4.

Information about the school

This is a much larger than average Church of England school and specialist technology college which occupies two sites approximately one and a half miles apart. Just under a half of the students are from White British backgrounds. The remainder are from a range of British minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest of which is those of Pakistani heritage. Over a quarter of the students speak English as an additional language and a larger than average proportion of students is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students identified with special education needs and/or disabilities is above average with many having autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). The school has a specialist unit for six ASD students as well as provision for deaf students and those with sight problems. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) mark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Bluecoat is a good school. It provides a good quality of education with outstanding provision for students' pastoral support and guidance. The school community is extremely harmonious and students were keen to let inspectors know how they enjoy and celebrate the cultural diversity as well as saying they feel extremely safe and well cared for. Faith is important and valued by all, while Christianity is the main faith, students from across all faiths feel very well supported. This is one reason why the school has excellent equality of opportunity.

The highly effective headteacher, very well supported by the senior leadership team, have empowered staff so that they are all committed to continually improving the quality of teaching and increasing the rate of learning. Leaders at all levels hold staff to account and the lessons learned when results dipped in 2010 mean that now the progress of students towards their target grades is very robustly monitored and any potential underachievement is quickly and effectively dealt with. Teaching groups are carefully matched to the expertise of teachers. This has meant that school records indicate results in 2011 are expected to be at least in line with those in 2009 when standards were above average and students made good progress. In the sixth form, strong leadership has brought about significant improvements to the provision and results are starting to rise. Recent module results are very encouraging. The school has a well-established and shared ambition to continue its momentum, so that it can carry on improving. There is an accurate appraisal of how well it is achieving and a well-formulated improvement plan to ensure it meets these high expectations. These demonstrate a good capacity to improve further.

Teaching has improved and is good. Some lessons are outstanding. A highlight of lessons and of the work of the school is the excellent relationships between staff and students. This creates a productive climate for learning and develops students' confidence in their ability to try new things, to answer questions and to work co-operatively. As a result, students respond well in lessons, make a good contribution to their own learning and their behaviour is good. They enjoy school and show mature attitudes. When teaching is less effective, lessons lack challenge. Consequently, the pace of learning is slower. Work is not always matched to students' abilities and the start of some lessons were too teacher-led, meaning students remain passive. Questioning is used well to identify what students know and then staff use their responses well as teaching points, although questions do not always challenge the majority of the class and involve all students. Marking is generally constructive, but at times it does not provide detailed and specific feedback as to how well students are doing and how they could improve. Even when marking is good, time is not always made available for students to respond to teachers' comments.

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The school utilises its specialist status well. Good provision for ICT equipment is used to support learning, for example the use of flip cameras. The specialism is also used well to support other schools within the area and to greatly enhance the excellent work within the community. Members of the governing body work well with senior leaders to set the direction of the school and to hold it to account. They have worked effectively to ensure that the school is able systematically to reduce its loan for previous overspending so that now it provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of learning by ensuring that:
 - work is well matched to students' abilities so that they are challenged and motivated
 - initial expositions by teachers are short and ensure students are engaged in learning quickly.
- Build upon the improvements to the quality of assessment by ensuring that marking consistently informs students how to improve and that time is made available for students to respond to and act on the advice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment on entry to the school is average. Results have shown that attainment has been consistently above average until 2010 when results fell. This dip has been rectified so that the school's data and results that students have already achieved, shows that they are back on track to reach above average standards. Progress is good and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive very good support to make similar progress to their peers, as do students from different ethnic backgrounds, including those who are learning English as an additional language and students known to be eligible for free school meals. Students who attend the ASD unit are very well supported and make good progress.

During the inspection, students were observed making good and often outstanding progress in lessons. In many lessons, students were fully engaged and responded well to being given opportunities to work in groups. Behaviour is very good when students are engaged and enthusiastic in lessons and want to achieve, however there are occasions when students are merely compliant because they are not fully motivated. Behaviour around school is good and students are thoughtful when travelling around the narrow corridors. Any misdemeanours are quickly and effectively dealt with, although responses from questionnaires show that at some times behaviour can be more problematic.

Responses to their questionnaire show that students feel exceptionally safe and enjoy coming to school. The respect shown for each other is a strong feature and also demonstrates excellent social skills. Many students take part in activities to help them keep fit and they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy, although in their questionnaire responses, this was an aspect on which students, parents and carers felt the school could do more. Students are aware of the opportunities provided to support their mental health, especially when dealing with the stresses of adolescence or examinations. Students report that the very few incidents of bullying are dealt with immediately and effectively.

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Students develop an excellent understanding of moral issues, along with very good inter-personal and social skills. A very strong spiritual element is evident throughout the school. Students make a very good contribution to the local community. For example, supporting elderly residents during icy weather as well as the regular coffee mornings they hold which are enjoyed by local residents. Students also explore philosophical ideas and moral dilemmas. They consider the impact of other cultures, such as African culture in art, medicine in history, and through visits to faith centres. Above average attendance, along with good key skills, ensure that students are well prepared for their futures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Students make good progress through a combination of good teaching, a curriculum which meets their needs well and outstanding care, guidance and support. Staff know their students very well and have good subject knowledge which engages students. Well-focused questioning is used well to extend students' learning, although this is not consistent across all lessons.

The curriculum meets the needs, interests and aspirations of students There are clear pathways for students to follow with opportunities to take GCSE examinations before the end of Year 11. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors and well-received enrichment days. The take-up of clubs at lunchtimes is very impressive. ICT is well developed across the curriculum, literacy is starting to be

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better coordinated but the use of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is underdeveloped.

Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those who are looked after are very well supported and their needs are well met, often including very good working with a variety of external agencies. Deaf students receive highly effective support, including working with students from other schools. The very supportive way in which ASD students are met at the start of school ensures they are better able to meet the demands of the school day without undue stress or worry. Students with special education needs and/or disabilities are very well supported through effective individual support both from the learning support faculty and teaching assistants. Students say that they are very well informed and supported prior to arriving at the school, and when they make choices for the next phase of their education or work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear overview of how the school is to develop and is not afraid to make tough decisions in order to bring about the best for the students. The great improvement to the overview of data has ensured the school has a far better understanding of how well students are progressing towards their demanding targets at Key Stage 4. Staff share this vision and ambition and are highly motivated in continuing the improvements within the school. All members of staff who submitted their questionnaire said they were proud to be a member of the school and that it was well led. This is testament to how effective the leadership has been in motivating and supporting staff. The school has been very successful in improving the quality of teaching, and has utilised effective support through its specialist areas. Middle leaders evaluate the work of their departments and then work to bring about identified improvements. The school has good arrangements with other local schools and external agencies. Parents and carers are regularly asked for their views on proposed changes and the recently introduced parent support officer is available to support parents and carers when necessary or requested.

Students and parents are also able to influence the work of the governing body, which is supportive of the school through its well defined and effective committees. Community cohesion is very effective but the impact of this work is not fully evaluated. Safeguarding procedures ensure the safety of students but some of the relevant documentation is not as comprehensive as it could be. The inclusive nature of the school, together with an exceptionally thorough analysis of examination data, including information for those

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students known to be eligible for free school meals, and the take-up of extra-curricular activities, has enabled the school to ensure excellent equality of opportunity.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Leaders and managers have worked hard to improve the effectiveness of the sixth form. They have made significant improvements to the quality of guidance, the curriculum and the quality of teaching. Students now receive good advice and guidance, especially with their preparation for higher education and their initial choice of courses. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with many lessons that are engaging, well planned and well resourced. Students are supported to discuss and apply prior learning to new situations, including increasing opportunities for them to research work for themselves. The good curriculum now ensures courses are better matched to the needs of students. These improvements mean that students are making at least satisfactory and often good progress, although the full impact of these improvements has yet to be seen in a complete set of A level results.

The leadership of the sixth form is good. An A level information service is used to set students' targets. However, some students commented that they found these targets unchallenging and they were already working above their target level. Students' response to sixth form life is good and they have enthusiastically taken up charity fundraising, mentoring of younger students, and wider responsibility in school and the community.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

There were a smaller proportion of responses than normally seen from a school of this size. Responses from parents and carers were positive, with the very large majority saying that their child enjoyed school. While some areas are not as positive for all questions, the very large majority of responses showed a high degree of satisfaction with the school. Parents and carers also commented on how well the school had supported their child. One comment, reflecting others, said: 'Bluecoat is an excellent safe environment with positive, enthusiastic staff who make learning interesting for my daughter.'

A very small proportion of responses identified particular issues. Poor behaviour in a few classes was raised as an issue by a small proportion. The inspection team found behaviour to be good, although they were aware from students that there are very rare incidents of misbehaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Nottingham Bluecoat School and Technology College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 174 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1829 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	41	93	53	9	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	72	41	96	55	5	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	75	43	82	47	17	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	39	94	54	10	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	61	35	102	59	8	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	29	94	54	27	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	20	117	67	18	10	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	61	35	87	50	12	7	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	31	103	59	13	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	39	80	46	16	9	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	28	89	51	21	12	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	60	34	93	53	12	7	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	77	44	91	52	4	2	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 March 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of The Nottingham Bluecoat School and Technology College,
Nottingham, NG8 5GY**

When I visited your school recently with my colleagues, we met some of you at lunchtime and talked to others during lessons and at break. Thank you very much for your help and cooperation. It was interesting to be greeted as 'Mr Ofsted' by so many of you. We were impressed with your good behaviour, manners, the excellent harmony there is between different groups and how well you contribute to the life of the school and local community. You told us that you greatly enjoy school and this is one reason, of many, that we judge your school to be good.

You make good progress. Results in your GCSE examinations, which fell last year, are expected to be back above average again this year. We observed over 50 lessons and judged that teaching is good overall with some outstanding lessons. The good curriculum enables you to take a wide variety of subjects and many of you take part in extra-curricular activities and lunchtime activities. There are excellent relationships with staff, and most of your lessons are challenging and interesting with a rich variety of activities. We have asked the school to make sure that more lessons are of the top quality by ensuring work is well matched to your abilities and that you are challenged and motivated. We have also asked that teachers' lesson introductions do not go on for too long so that you are able to get down to work quickly at the start of lessons. We have asked the school to make sure your work is always marked thoroughly. You can help by always taking note of your teachers' comments and responding to their advice.

Staff care for you exceptionally well to prepare you for your next phase of education or the world of work. You have a very good understanding of your local community. Your headteacher and other senior leaders have very clearly identified what needs to be done and they are very determined to carry on improving the school. They are supported by some excellent subject and pastoral leaders, teachers and other staff.

We wish you well at this good school of which you are justifiably proud.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

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