

# Bideford College

## Inspection report

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|                                |                      |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 113516               |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Devon                |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 338192               |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 2–3 December 2009    |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Helen Pennington 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>                      | Comprehensive                                   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                                       |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 11–18   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed   |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form         | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 1630  |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 180   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                              |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Sheila Bloomfield                               |
| <b>Principal</b>                           | Veronica Matthews                               |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 9 November 2009                                 |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Abbotsham Road<br>Bideford<br>Devon<br>EX39 3AR |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01237 477611                                    |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01237 428114                                    |
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|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>         | 11–18             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>  | 2–3 December 2009 |
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 42 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the college's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation. They reviewed responses to questionnaires from students, staff, and 365 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following aspects.

- The quality of teaching and the impact this has on students' learning.
- The college's systems for assessment and tracking.
- The effectiveness of support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The college's strategies to manage students' behaviour.
- Achievement in the sixth form.

## Information about the school

Bideford College is a significantly larger than average school. It serves the small town of Bideford and the extensive surrounding rural area. Students are almost exclusively of White British heritage. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. A significant number of these students have social, emotional and behavioural issues.

The college has held specialist science status since 2004. It achieved the Healthy Schools Standard in 2007 and the Career Mark in 2009.

The college is scheduled to move to a new building in September 2010.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

The headteacher is successfully leading the college through a period of considerable change whilst the new college is being built. Year on year since the last inspection, attainment at GCSE has improved. The college's results are now close to the national average. The college's tracking indicates that this improved achievement is evident throughout the college.

The curriculum has been expanded to provide an increased range of vocational options for students in Key Stage 4. The success of this initiative is already resulting in more positive attitudes from some of the students involved. However, the impact of these changes is not yet evident in students' attainment. College leaders provide teachers with a wealth of data about students. These data are not yet being used by all classroom teachers to target work appropriately. In too many lessons, teachers do not make their expectations for learning explicit. This slows the progress that students make in lessons. The college has implemented strategies to reduce the occurrence of low-level classroom disruption. Very few lessons observed during the inspection were disrupted by students' behaviour. Around the college, students were generally orderly, although incidents of unruly behaviour were observed.

Students enjoy the sixth form experience, where they have good opportunities to develop their personal skills and confidence. There is a suitable range of courses and students make satisfactory progress, attaining expected standards at A level. Monitoring and evaluation activities tend to be informal and lack rigour.

The senior leadership's evaluation of the present performance of the college is accurate. The college has improved the curriculum and reduced incidents of unacceptable behaviour in lessons. It has been successful in raising attainment at GCSE and increasing attendance. These changes demonstrate the college's satisfactory capacity to improve.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve learning and progress in all lessons by:
  - the leadership creating a shared ambition to achieve the best for every student
  - making more effective use of assessment data to plan lessons which are suitably challenging and meet the individual needs of each student
  - ensuring that students know at the start of every lesson exactly what they are trying to achieve and at the end how much they have learned

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- Improve the behaviour of students through the consistent application of the college's agreed behaviour management strategies.
- Improve outcomes and provision in the sixth form by:
  - creating and implementing an appropriate strategic plan
  - rigorously monitoring actions for improvement.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Learning and progress seen in lessons were, for the most part, at least satisfactory. Students made the most progress when they were active, engaged and had opportunities to develop independent learning skills through group work and discussion. In the majority of lessons, however, there was too much focus on the teacher talking and students were receiving information rather than developing ideas, thinking and analysing for themselves. Learning and progress for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities were similar to that of other students. The most able, however, were frequently not sufficiently challenged and this slowed the rate at which they made progress.

The college manages the complex school site well. Although reported incidents of bullying have increased, most students feel that the college deals with the issue effectively. Consequently students feel safe.

Students have healthy food choices available to them, and the personal, social and health education curriculum contributes to students' sound understanding about how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They raise money for local charities and are able to contribute to the school community, sharing views on subjects such as uniform, behaviour and food choices through surveys and the year and college councils.

Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is above average. The college has undertaken pilot work on functional skills. This work, together with improving outcomes in mathematics and a strong focus on tackling weaknesses in literacy, gives students satisfactory skills to support their future economic well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>                             | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:   |          |
| Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>  | 3        |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress   | 3        |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 3        |

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

| <b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b><br>Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms        |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Pupils' behaviour</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b><br>Taking into account:<br>Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup> | <b>3</b> |
|  | 2        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>   | <b>3</b> |

### How effective is the provision?

Notable strengths in almost all lessons observed during the inspection were the good relationships evident between teachers and students and the teachers' good subject knowledge. However, lesson plans frequently lack clear learning intentions.

Consequently it is difficult for teachers to assess progress in these lessons. In most lessons, teaching is directed at the whole class and too little attention is paid to matching work to students' individual abilities. Planning indicates that teachers know their students well, but often, although students with specific learning needs are identified, there is little evidence of what action is being taken to meet those needs. Where they are used, teaching assistants provide helpful support.

The curriculum for students in Key Stage 3 has been suitably adapted to meet their needs. For example, social skills classes have been provided for some students. Development of personal learning and thinking skills across the curriculum provides sound preparation for the next stage of students' learning. In Key Stage 4, there is extended provision for those wishing to undertake work-related learning and vocational options in areas such as art, and leisure and tourism. The science specialism enhances the curriculum through broader provision such as family and community learning. There is satisfactory extra-curricular provision, but this is limited as a result of the lunch break being shortened during the building work and after-school transport constraints.

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory and improving. A wide range of additional support for students with specific needs has recently been introduced. This support is contributing to the improved progress being made by students with special educational needs. Home-school link workers are undertaking much of the traditional pastoral care to good effect, allowing the teachers with pastoral roles to focus more on raising achievement. The impact of this work is beginning to be felt. The number of fixed term exclusions has fallen over the last three years.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b><br>Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms |  |
|---|--|

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The quality of teaching</b><br>Taking into account:<br>The use of assessment to support learning            | <b>3</b> |
|  | 3        |
| <b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>   | <b>3</b> |

## How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership has vision and ambition for the college. Systems and procedures to bring about improvement have been put in place. The impact of this work is securing better outcomes for students in some classes, but these improvements are inconsistent throughout the college. Middle leaders undertake a range of monitoring and evaluation activities, through lesson observations and regular scrutiny of students' work. There are still inconsistencies between departments. Where there is insufficient focus on teachers improving their practice this limits outcomes for students. Nevertheless, the staff recognise that improvements have begun, and morale is improving.

Governors know the strengths of the college and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. An audit to analyse the characteristics of the college in terms of its local, national and international context has been undertaken, but planning and evaluation of the impact of work to strengthen community cohesion are limited. At local level, strong partnerships ensure smooth transitions in and out of college as well as providing additional opportunities for students.

The performance and experience of different groups of students is analysed, in terms of achievement, support and sanctions. Incidents of racist behaviour are monitored and dealt with but actions taken are not always consistent.

All safeguarding procedures and policies are in place in line with government requirements. The college has undertaken suitable risk assessments for activities and for the college site.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b><br>Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning | <b>3</b> |
|   | 3        |
| <b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>                  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>   | <b>3</b> |

| <b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b><br>Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>   | <b>3</b> |

## Sixth form

There has been a small expansion of sixth form courses to include some with a vocational slant, such as electronics. Students are satisfied with the range of courses on offer and believe that they are guided well during Year 11 about what the sixth form at Bideford has to offer, as well as about provision at other institutions. Students make satisfactory progress, and academic achievement is improving gradually. Results at A level are in line with expectations.

Students have opportunities to develop socially and to make a positive contribution to the school community. For example, some students deliver personal, social and health education lessons to Year 9 students whilst others support those in Year 7 with their reading. These are good examples of how sixth formers are able to take on responsibilities which help to prepare them for adult life.

The senior leadership of the college recognises that the current sixth form development plan is not good enough to bring about improvement sufficiently quickly. To address this, they are preparing a strategic plan to develop the sixth form more rapidly. There are early signs of improvement as a result of recent work to analyse students' academic performance which has led to more individually focused target setting.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:                           |          |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form        | 3        |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form     | 3        |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form    | 3        |

## Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire are happy with their children's experience at the college. Most agree or strongly agree that their children enjoy college and that the college keeps them safe. Almost one third of parents do not feel that the college deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors looked closely at behaviour and have asked the college to make this a priority



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

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for improvement.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bideford 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 365 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1630 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements  | Strongly Agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |    | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | %  | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 74             | 20 | 250   | 68 | 33       | 9  | 5                 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 50             | 14 | 274   | 75 | 32       | 9  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress   | 72             | 20 | 265   | 64 | 47       | 13 | 5                 | 1 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 35             | 18 | 259   | 71 | 26       | 7  | 2                 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 49             | 13 | 267   | 73 | 34       | 9  | 2                 | 1 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning  | 48             | 13 | 225   | 62 | 67       | 18 | 4                 | 1 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 34             | 9  | 233   | 64 | 68       | 19 | 9                 | 2 |
| 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) | 59             | 16 | 259   | 71 | 15       | 4  | 3                 | 1 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs  | 54             | 15 | 262   | 72 | 24       | 7  | 4                 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 48             | 13 | 196   | 54 | 79       | 22 | 23                | 6 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 30             | 8  | 223   | 61 | 55       | 15 | 10                | 3 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 61             | 17 | 244   | 67 | 24       | 7  | 7                 | 2 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school   | 68             | 19 | 255   | 70 | 26       | 7  | 2                 | 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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 39  | 58   | 3            | 0          |
| Primary schools      | 13  | 50   | 33           | 4          |
| Secondary schools    | 17  | 40   | 34           | 9          |
| Sixth forms          | 18  | 43   | 37           | 2          |
| Special schools      | 26  | 54   | 18           | 2          |
| Pupil referral units | 7   | 55   | 30           | 7          |
| All schools          | 15  | 49   | 32           | 5          |

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul> |
| 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.**



Dear Students

Inspection of Bideford College, Bideford EX39 3AR

Thank you for your contributions to the recent inspection of your college. We enjoyed meeting you, hearing your views and seeing you at work. The inspection judged that the college provides you with a satisfactory education. You are starting to benefit from some of the recent improvements the college has implemented and many of you now receive additional support to help you with your work. Results have improved in recent years and college leaders are tracking your work carefully to make sure that the higher standards are maintained. While the building work is going on, the site can be difficult. Staff are working hard to manage the situation until you move into your new building. It is important that your results are as good as they can be. To help secure the best outcomes for you, we have asked the college leaders and teachers to focus particularly on the following things.

- Improving learning and progress in all lessons by:
- making more effective use of assessment data to plan lessons which are suitably challenging and meet your individual needs
- ensuring that you know at the start of every lesson exactly what you are trying to achieve and at the end how much you have learned.
- Supporting you to improve your behaviour through the consistent application of the college's agreed behaviour management strategies.
- Improving outcomes and provision in the sixth form by:
- creating and implementing a strategic development plan
- rigorously monitoring actions for improvement.

You can help by always giving your full attention in lessons and by considering the impact on others of your behaviour around the college.

With very best wishes from the inspection team,

Helen Pennington

Lead inspector

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