

Great Baddow High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115223
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326152
Inspection dates	8–9 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Phillips 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1374
Sixth form	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Mundy
Headteacher	Roger Hunton
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2005
School address	Duffield Road Chelmsford Essex CM2 9RZ
Telephone number	01245 265821
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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

Great Baddow High School is situated in the Great Baddow West ward of Chelmsford. It is larger than average for a secondary school, but with an average-sized sixth form. One in ten students is selected for ability in physical education and sport.

Most students come from the Great Baddow East and West, Galleywood, and Chelmer Village wards, but a small number come from further afield. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The great majority are from White British backgrounds and almost all have English as their first language. The proportion of students registered by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, as is the proportion of students with a statement of educational need. The majority of these students have moderate learning, or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. In addition, the school has a designated Resource Based Provision for Hearing Impaired Students (RBPHIS) for 15 students.

Great Baddow High School was designated as a specialist sports college in September 2002.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Great Baddow High continues to provide a good standard of education and care for students. Specialist sports college status plays a very strong part in the school's success, as does the excellent work of the Resource Based Provision for Hearing Impaired Students (RBPHIS). Students' personal development and well-being are good because of the good care, guidance and support provided.

Achievement and standards are good. From average starting points, students attain above average standards in their examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, although they make better progress overall than they do in English and mathematics. The good teaching and learning seen throughout the inspection in all subjects, including English and mathematics, shows that students currently at the school are making good progress. Inspectors saw no inadequate lessons, matching the school's view of teaching. At the same time, there is only a relatively small amount of teaching that is outstanding. The school's monitoring of lessons does not give enough emphasis to the differences between good and outstanding teaching, nor sufficiently help good teachers to reach the highest standards in lessons and consequently help students to make even better progress. The marking of students' work remains inconsistent and a key area for further development.

The curriculum is good. The Key Stage 4 curriculum contains a good blend of academic and vocational courses to suit all interests and abilities, as well as increasing provision for literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). Specialist sports college status has also brought an increased range of courses, and results in these are very good. The sports college specialism is starting to have an impact on other curricular areas such as numeracy and literacy, where sporting themes capture Year 7 students' interests and develop their reading, writing and speaking skills. However, links with some curricular areas are not so advanced, for example, through dance and the arts.

The headteacher is, quite rightly, widely and well respected by students, staff and parents. Supported by an experienced senior management team, his strong and principled leadership is essential to the school's good ethos, with an emphasis on what one parent praised as a 'rounded, balanced school life'. Parents are extremely pleased with all aspects of provision, although a small number would like the school to take more account of their views and those of students. The school gives good value for money, and governors fulfil their duties well. There is good capacity for further improvement. The school knows itself well. Senior and middle managers identify and promote the school's strengths and have taken swift, effective action when performance has not matched their expectations. Science, an area for improvement at the last inspection, is now an area of strength in the main school. However, there are also some aspects of the school's work where there could be greater critical analysis in order to raise standards even higher. For example, whilst students have very good involvement with the local community through sports college status, there are few regular opportunities for students to work actively with others from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the school has not evaluated how teaching across the school can help students to understand others and value diversity.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, join the sixth form with below average standards. By the end of their A-level courses, they achieve standards that are in line with national averages overall, and this represents good progress. In 2008, standards were above average in history, biology, German, and media studies. However, standards were well below average in chemistry, art, geography and drama.

Students enjoy being in the sixth form, and their attendance is good. The curriculum, which comprises largely of academic AS and A-level qualifications, provides a good match to students' needs and interests, and students say they are pleased with their choice of subjects. Students also benefit from a good range of out-of-school opportunities, including sporting and cultural events, trips and visits abroad. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and share their expertise well with their students, with whom they build good working relationships. Most lessons are good, although a minority are dominated by presentation by the teacher with insufficient opportunities for students to learn independently. Students say that they feel well supported. They receive good help when choosing courses, both before and during their stay in the sixth form, and are prepared well for higher education and employment thanks to the good links the school has established with local universities and the Connexions service. In turn, many sixth formers provide support to younger students through mentoring and helping in lessons, and support primary pupils through the sports partnership. However, opportunities for students' spiritual development are too limited and the tutorial period at the beginning of the day is not used to good effect.

The head of sixth form took up post in September 2008, having previously been deputy head of sixth form. Leadership is confident, based on a clear understanding of the sixth form's strengths and weaknesses, and is committed to improving students' experience of the sixth form and their achievement and standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics to match the higher standards achieved in other areas of the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of marking so that students receive better and more regular written feedback about how to improve their work.
- Evaluate more critically aspects of the school's provision including teaching, and aspects of students' cultural development, to set even higher expectations of what the school can achieve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students arrive at Great Baddow in Year 7 with standards that are in line with the national average. They make steady progress during Key Stage 3, and by the end of Key Stage 4 the proportion gaining five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics is above average, but the proportion of students achieving five or more

good GCSEs or equivalent vocational qualifications in any combination of subjects is well above average. In 2008, standards were at least in line with the national average in all GCSE and vocational subjects, and above average in many. Standards were particularly high in some subjects, including art, German, ICT and drama. The school's tracking indicates that current students are on target to make good progress and this view was supported by the good progress seen in lessons during the inspection.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. In 2007, there was a marked difference between the achievement of students with a statement of specific educational need, who did extremely well, and those with difficulties of a more general nature. However, the 2008 results and work observed by inspectors suggest that all groups of students are currently making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' good behaviour contributes well to the positive atmosphere around the school. They respond positively to the new 'rewards and consequences' system that the school council helped to develop, and the numbers of exclusions are declining. Students respond well to the school's efforts to promote healthy lifestyles particularly in their substantial involvement in sports activities and their use and appreciation of healthy meals.

Students enjoy their education at Great Baddow. Following a two-year dip, attendance is now back in line with national averages but there are still too many instances of parents taking children out of school for holidays during term time. Students say that they feel safe, and that bullying is infrequent and resolved effectively, a view confirmed by the school's detailed incident records. Younger students settle quickly with the help of mentoring by older students.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Students are aware of other faiths and ways of life although their practical experience and understanding of what it means to live in a culturally diverse society is more limited. Students are prepared well for working life, securing skills through work experience and the programme of enterprise activities in school. The school's focus on developing literacy, numeracy, and ICT is helping students to make good improvements in skills that are essential for their economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A large proportion of the lessons observed during the inspection were good, and none were inadequate. Particular strengths include teachers' good subject knowledge, and positive working relationships that encourage students to enjoy their lessons and behave well. Lessons are planned well with clear learning objectives that are shared effectively with students. Students with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities are included well because teachers know their needs, work is set at an appropriately challenging level, and they receive effective support from committed teaching assistants. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, it is often because students are not active enough and the pace of their learning is too slow.

One aspect of teaching that remains underdeveloped across the school is the marking of students' work. The best marking includes regular and supportive comments to help students improve, but in too many instances work is marked superficially without rigorously challenging the quality of both content and presentation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets different students' needs, interests and abilities through a range of academic and vocational courses, including in sports, art, science and ICT. Statutory requirements are met, including those for citizenship, through a series of pastoral days, and within religious education. The school has responded to the need to improve English and mathematics skills further by providing additional time in Years 10 and 11, and now plans to introduce extra support in Key Stage 3. Provision for ICT is also well developed.

The school uses its specialist status as a sports college to provide a very good range of courses and activities in all years, although dance remains an area for development. Students participate fully in many sports activities, and awards including Junior Sports Leadership, with high levels of success. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities outside of sport, including in the performing arts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All statutory safeguarding, health and safety requirements are met. Students are known well by staff, and feel well supported. There are very effective arrangements for the induction of new students including a valuable survival guide written by students. Students and parents receive good support in making decisions about educational and vocational options at the ages of 14 and 16.

The school makes appropriate use of assessment data to set targets to inform students about how well they are doing, but students do not always know what they need to do to improve further. Reports to parents are regular, but similarly are more focused on grades achieved than about what needs to be done next.

Vulnerable students are supported well. Procedures to reintroduce excluded students back into school are well considered and personalised. There are good links with a wide range of external agencies, and within school through the effective deployment of teaching assistants. The work of the RBPHIS staff was singled out for praise by a parent who told inspectors 'the provision and personal care given to my child is of the highest quality'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Led by the headteacher, the senior leadership team provides good guidance and support for the school's improvement. They know the school well, and inspectors' observations matched their judgements. Systematic monitoring and planning lead to appropriate targets being set to maintain the school's good performance. Middle leaders are using a greater range of strategies to secure improvement in their departments, including a well-established cycle of faculty reviews. However, self-evaluation is not yet consistently rigorous enough to drive the school towards outstanding outcomes for students. For example, whilst the school rightly celebrates the good opportunities that the students have to work with the local community, opportunities to extend students' understanding of cultural diversity in national and global contexts are less well developed.

The committed and experienced governing body provides the school with good support and challenge, for example, through close monitoring of the school's plans and budget, and review of results and targets. Financial management is good and the school provides good value for money.

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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?	2	2
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/or disabilities make progress	2	2

Personal development and well-being

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

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.

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?	2	2

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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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



10 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Great Baddow High School, Chelmsford, CM2 9RZ

You will remember that, in early October, I visited Great Baddow with four colleagues. We were pleased to meet and talk with so many of you during our visit and, on behalf of the team, I would like to thank you very much for the positive and honest way that you spoke with us. I am writing to you now to let you know the outcomes of our inspection.

Great Baddow High continues to provide you with a good standard of education and care. Good teaching and your good behaviour combine to help you make good progress in your examinations. For that, many congratulations to you and your teachers. The school provides you with a varied and interesting range of courses to suit students of all abilities, and as a sports college, provides you with good opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle.

To improve further, I have asked the school to focus on three main priorities:

- Help you to reach the same high standards in English and maths as you do in some of your other subjects.
- Ensure that your work is marked in more detail, so that you have a clearer idea about what you need to do to improve your work.
- Be even more ambitious about what you and the school can achieve, so that more of your lessons can become outstanding, and you can have more opportunities to work with people from different backgrounds to yourselves.

You and your parents can help the school with one other matter. Although your attendance improved last year, there are still too many of you taking holidays during term-time. This means that you miss important lessons and, ultimately, this affects your exam results – so please help yourselves and your teachers by attending school whenever possible.

Thank you once again for your contribution to this inspection, and the very best of luck with your future studies.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector