

## SUMMARY OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

### BLATCHINGTON MILL SCHOOL

Hove

Headteacher: Mr N Hunter

Date of inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> September 2002

The school was inspected by 19 inspectors, led by Mr T Feast. This is a summary of the inspection report, which is available from the school.

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Blatchington Mill School and Sixth-Form College is a mixed, community comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18 years. There are 1690 students on roll, with 164 in the sixth form. There are many more students on roll than at the last inspection and is the case for other secondary schools nationally. There are more boys than girls in Years 9 to 11 but this trend has been reversed significantly and there are now more girls than boys in Years 7 and 8. The attainment of students on entry to the school at the age of eleven in Year 7 is average overall and has improved significantly over the last three years. One hundred and fifty-nine students have been identified as having special educational needs, a figure broadly in line with the national average. Thirty students have been provided with statements of special educational needs by the local education authority, a figure also broadly in line with the national average and a similar proportion to that at the last inspection. About six per cent of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, a slight increase since the last inspection. This is higher than most schools nationally. Fourteen students are provided with support for English as an additional language, a similar figure to that at the last inspection. Two hundred and twenty-nine students are entitled to free school meals, a lower percentage than at the last inspection but a figure broadly in line with the national average. Twelve students have been identified as refugees, most of whom are Sudanese Copts. The school serves a very mixed catchment area and recruits students from all over the city of Brighton and Hove. The family backgrounds are broadly average. Since the last inspection, the school has achieved specialist college status in performing arts. Special educational needs support is now provided in the new facilities of the student support centre.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has many very good features. The standards the students attain are above those expected nationally in Years 7 to 9 and match those expected overall. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leadership and management are very good. The overall effectiveness of the school is good and it gives good value for money.

#### What the school does well

- Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 are above the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Behaviour is very good, as are relationships in the school.
- The provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The contribution of the community to students' learning is very good.
- The school's management of its finances is excellent.

#### What could be improved

- Standards in science and geography at GCSE are below the national average.
- The attendance of students is unsatisfactory.
- There are too few opportunities for students' spiritual development.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1996. The school's improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The improvement in strengthening procedures for monitoring the work of departments, the implementation of policies and the setting of priorities have been very good. The quality and efficiency of the sixth-form provision have been kept under review very well, although there has not been as much progress as the school would have liked. The improvement in involving parents and the community in students' learning has been very good. The progress in

building on the good practice for developing students' personal responsibility for their own learning has been satisfactory. Improving the links between the subject departments and the learning support team has been good. The progress in improving access to the site for both pedestrians and vehicles has been very good.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 11 and sixth-form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	A
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	n/a	E	

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

*(average points scores are calculated by given each grade achieved a numerical value, adding the total for each student and dividing it by the number of students who took the particular examination or test)*

The standards the students achieved in the unconfirmed national tests at the age of 14 in Year 9 in 2002 were an improvement on the school's results in 2001 in English, mathematics and science, but particularly in English and mathematics. In 2001, the standards were above those attained nationally and well above those of similar schools. The trend since 1997 in the school's average National Curriculum point scores is broadly in line with the national trend. The boys attained better results than the girls in mathematics and science and similar results in English. The results in the unconfirmed GCSE examinations in 2002 saw the average point score per student decrease slightly from 40.9 to 40.1 and the percentage of students achieving 5+ A\*-C grades decreased from 52 per cent to 49 per cent. Boys attained better results than the girls in mathematics and science but the girls' results in English were substantially better. In 2001, the average total GCSE point score per student was above the national average and those achieving 5+ A\*-C grades was in line with the national average. The girls attained higher average point scores than the boys overall, as is the case nationally. The trend since 1997 in the school's average GCSE point score per student is broadly in line with the national trend. The average point score for advanced level (AL) and advanced supplementary level (AS) candidates in 2001 was 11.5, which was well below the national average of 17.4. Boys' performance was higher than the girls'. The school was above its 2002 target for English and below its targets for mathematics and science in the unconfirmed national tests at the age of 14. The school was in line with its target for 1+ A\*-G grades and for average point score, but below that for 5+ A\*-C grades in the unconfirmed 2002 GCSE results. Standards above those expected nationally were seen in English and in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9 but they were below those expected in science in Years 10 and 11. Standards above expectations were seen during the inspection in information and communications technology (ICT), art and design, music, design and technology, dance, physical education and religious education. In many subjects, students were achieving well in relation to their standards in the subjects when they started at the school. Students with special educational needs achieve well in relation to the targets set in their individual education plans. Students with English as an additional language make good progress, as do those with refugee status, although analysis of the unconfirmed results for 2002 show Bangladeshi and Sudanese students attaining lower than the average point scores of the school overall. Students with Indian, Chinese and Arabic backgrounds attained results above the school's average point score.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students' attitudes are good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating oppressive behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is good and relationships are very good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory.

In school, students show a good interest and enthusiasm for their studies and show good respect for the feelings of others. The taking of holidays in school term times is having an adverse effect on the level of student attendance.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Satisfactory

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection, in the reduction of the amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed and a significant improvement in the teaching observed which was very good or excellent. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in art and design, ICT, music, science and personal and social education, and examples of very good teaching were observed in biology, chemistry, design and technology, dance, drama, English, geography, history, mathematics, physical education, psychology, religious education, Spanish and special educational needs. Teaching in the core subject of mathematics is good in Years 7 to 11 and, in English and science, teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. The teaching of literacy across the curriculum is good and in numeracy it is satisfactory. Relatively little unsatisfactory teaching was observed, mainly in science but also in English and mathematics. It was usually linked to the lack of planning of specific tasks to meet the varying needs of students which led to the lack of sufficient challenge in the work or the pace at which the students were expected to work.

In over two-thirds of lessons observed, teaching was good or better. The improvement in the quality of teaching is reflected in good learning overall. Students acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding well in most lessons. They show very good interest and concentration in most lessons and work at a good pace.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The range and quality of the extra-curricular provision is very good. The range of provision in the performing arts and in physical education is excellent.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The provision is very good.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	The provision is very good from the specialist support staff and is good overall in lessons.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall, very good for students' moral, social and cultural development but unsatisfactory for their spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its students	Good overall.

The school has good and effective links with the parents overall.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. This very good leadership and management are having a very positive impact on most areas identified as priorities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall. The governing body plays a very good role in shaping the direction of the school and in holding the school to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	It is good overall and much improved since the last inspection.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The principles of best value are applied very well.

The headteacher and key staff and the governing body ensure that there is very clear educational direction to the work of the school and that the school's resources are used very well. The staffing of the school is very good. The accommodation and the resources are satisfactory overall.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school expects the students to work hard.</li><li>• The school is well led and managed.</li><li>• Students like school.</li><li>• Students make good progress.</li><li>• They are comfortable approaching the school.</li><li>• The school works closely with parents.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An increased amount and an improved quality of homework.</li><li>• The information about their child's progress.</li><li>• The school working more closely with parents.</li></ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. The school has considerably improved its communications with parents since the last inspection and the partnership with parents is good and there is good information provided to parents about their child's progress. There is some variation in both the amount and the quality of tasks set and of the marking of homework but it is satisfactory overall. A few parents commented that different groups of students had different opportunities to take advantage of the school's provision. The inspection recognises that different opportunities are offered, but that the provision is equally good for the different groups of students.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

At the time of the inspection there were 164 students on roll, a considerable increase since the last inspection. There were considerably more students in Year 12 than Year 13; 45 girls and 63 boys in Year 12, and 37 girls and 19 boys in Year 13. At the end of Year 11, a majority of the students choose to leave the main school and pursue their education elsewhere. The attainment of the majority of students on entry into the sixth form between 1999 and 2001 has been below the national average, but is currently in line with it, reflecting new entry requirements introduced by the school for the 2002 entry. A significant number of students leave the school at the end of Year 12 with AS-level or vocational qualifications. Relatively few students join the sixth form from other schools, although some foreign students join for up to one year in order to broaden their social and linguistic experience. Students follow a range of AS- and A2-level courses, as well as a more limited range of vocational and GCSE re-sit courses. All students in Year 12 also take a general studies course and all students follow a personal, social and health education programme.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. It provides satisfactory value for money, and its cost effectiveness is improving. In 2001, the A-level results were well below the national average although the majority of students taking the examinations achieved satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE, with boys achieving better than girls. Attainment in many subjects is in line with national expectations, and students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. Attainment is improving and, in some subjects such as history, the unconfirmed examination results in 2002 show significant gains on the previous year's results. However, in English, standards attained are below those expected nationally.

Students following AS- and A2-level courses receive a suitably broad and balanced education, although a substantial minority is unable to study the combination of subjects for which they hoped, owing to the constraints in the timetable option blocks. A substantial number of students following vocational or GCSE re-sit courses receive a much less broad education. Although many of these students also do work experience, they have substantial gaps in their timetables.

The programme for personal, social and health education is satisfactory but is relatively limited in scope. The amount of personal and academic support is satisfactory, although reports to parents are not consistently informative about standards, progress and ways to improve in the different subjects. The limited number of registration sessions which students are required to attend restricts the amount of personal support that some students receive. Some students feel that they receive insufficient advice on what courses they should follow when joining the sixth form or what options are available to them when they leave the school at age 18. However, there are good links with local schools and universities. Many students are positive about their experience in the sixth form, although there is only limited integration with the main school.

There is clear educational direction of the sixth form, co-ordinated by two senior members of staff, and leadership and management are good overall. There has been an improvement since 2001 in the monitoring and review of performance in the sixth form, for example with assessment data being more effectively analysed by the senior management. However, the use of this information at departmental level remains inconsistent. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, the impact of teaching on students' attainment is less effective in some subjects such as English. Students study key skills within their chosen subject options. Accommodation is unsatisfactory due to inadequate study facilities, including the availability of computing facilities at times. The sixth form does not meet statutory requirements in that it does not provide sufficient religious education for students and there is not a daily act of collective worship. Overall, there has been a satisfactory improvement in the sixth form since the previous inspection.

**Strengths**

- Good teaching in a number of subjects, leading to good learning.
- A good range of courses is offered at AS- and A2-level.
- A coherent and strategic vision for the future development of the sixth form.
- A very good match of staff to the demands of the curriculum.

**What could be improved**

- The A-level results of students are well below the national average overall.
- Sixth-form accommodation, which is deficient, particularly in areas for quiet study.
- The consistency of monitoring and guidance given to all students.
- The provision of religious education in the sixth form.
- The range of learning opportunities of those students following vocational or re-sit courses.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.*

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English	Provision is unsatisfactory. Standards are below those expected although they are improving. Achievement is unsatisfactory, partly because students are unclear about how to obtain good grades. The quality of teaching is satisfactory.
Mathematics	Provision is satisfactory. Standards are in line with national expectations. Teaching demonstrates good subject knowledge, although marking and monitoring lack precision, and is satisfactory.
Biology	Provision is good. The take-up in Year 13 is small but, in Year 12, standards are currently above national expectations and students achieve well. Teaching is good.
Psychology	Provision is good. Standards are consistently above expectations and teaching and learning are good.
History	Provision is good. Standards are in line with national expectations and students respond well to good teaching.
ICT	Provision is good. Standards are above expectations and students respond to good teaching by achieving well.
Business studies	Provision is good. Standards are in line with national expectations. In lessons, the quality of teaching is good and girls achieve well, whilst boys achieve satisfactorily.
Leisure and tourism	Provision is good. Students' levels of attainment are above those expected nationally and their achievement is good. The quality of teaching is good.
Drama	Provision is good. Although attainment in 2001 was well below average, current attainment is above that expected and achievement is good. The quality of teaching is good.

### The following sixth-form subjects were also sampled:

Dance	Provision is very good. Standards are above national expectations and achievement is good.
French	Provision is satisfactory. Standards are now above national expectations and achievement is satisfactory.
Product design	Provision is very good with standards and achievement above national expectations.
Art and design	Provision is very good. Very good and sometimes excellent teaching leads to high standards and very good achievement.
Music	Provision is very good and standards are above national expectations. Students are enthusiastic about the subject.
Geography	Provision is good. The standards in the one lesson observed were above national expectations.
Religious studies	Provision is satisfactory with standards in line with national expectations.
Chemistry	Provision is good. Currently there is take-up only in Year 12, and these students achieve well with standards above national expectations.
Physics	Provision is good. Standards in Year 12 are above national expectations and students achieve well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory. Whilst some students feel that they receive good support, others feel that they get inadequate guidance on what courses to follow or what opportunities are available beyond school. Careers guidance is unsatisfactory for some students. Many school reports lack specific detail about progress made in individual subjects and how students can improve.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. Following a long process of review and evaluation, the school is committed to raising the profile of the sixth form and students' standards. There is thorough strategic planning and a coherent vision for the future. The sixth form is increasingly cost effective.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Classes are small and students receive individual attention.</li><li>• Good relations with teachers.</li><li>• The school helps them settle in well.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accommodation, particularly the provision of more study areas.</li><li>• The guidance given on options and career choices.</li><li>• Availability of computing facilities.</li></ul>

Students are positive about most aspects of the sixth form and would recommend it to their friends. The inspection team agreed with students' views that guidance, accommodation and access to computer facilities should be improved.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth-form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*

## OTHER INFORMATION

The governing body is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 days of receiving the inspection report, showing how the school will tackle the improvements needed. This action plan will be circulated to all parents at the school.

*The contractor appointed by OFSTED for this inspection was Bench Marque Ltd, National Westminster Bank Chambers, Victoria Street, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset, TA8 1AN.*

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