

# Berwick Community High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122361
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	292382
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jim Bennetts 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	922
6th form	174
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Wyndham Rogers-Coltman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stephen Quinlan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2001
<b>School address</b>	Adams Drive Berwick-upon-Tweed Northumberland TD15 2JF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01289 305083
<b>Fax number</b>	01289 302681

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This upper school serves the town of Berwick and a wide surrounding rural area. Those joining the school come from several middle schools. Almost all students are White British. The numbers of students entitled to free meals or who have special educational needs are similar to national proportions. This is a Business and Enterprise College and has received a number of accolades, such as Investor in People status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Since the last inspection, behaviour and achievement have improved throughout the school. The school now enjoys much greater parental support.

Students joining the school achieved broadly average results at age 11 in middle schools. Results in national tests at age 14 were weak in the past but are now much better, mainly due to strong improvement in English. In 2006, results in English at age 14 placed Berwick in the top ten percent nationally. At Key Stage 4, students secured very good results in the non-GCSE information and communication technology (ICT) course, but performance was weaker in some GCSE courses, including in English and mathematics. The figure for five good passes (grade A\*-C) in GCSE or equivalent courses was nearly seventy percent, well above the national average. When English and mathematics are included in the best five subjects, that figure is thirty five percent. In the sixth form there has been significant improvement in standards since the last inspection; however, achievement is still not as good as it could be.

Teaching is generally satisfactory; some is good. Lessons are often enjoyable, but the pace is sometimes too slow and too low in aspirations. Students' precise needs are not always tackled by sharply focussed intervention in a lesson or through marking. The curriculum is generally good. In the sixth form, creative approaches have provided wide choice for students. The courses linked to the school's status as a Business and Enterprise College have proved successful.

Students like school and generally behave well. They are well looked after. Although some concerns remain, the school is well thought of by parents – indeed, all but four percent of those completing questionnaires think it is well run. In the sixth form, students are strong ambassadors for the school, demonstrating self-confidence and debating with conviction – but they would like more say in matters affecting their school.

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior team. They are encouraged in their endeavours by an astute governing body. There has been improvement on all fronts. Much has been achieved over the last six years. Senior staff know that there is more to do, and the school is well placed for further improvement. To secure this, self-evaluation at all levels needs more openness.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Sixth form students are self confident, articulate and express opinions about their school cogently. They feel that most courses have been effective, and they generally find sixth form life agreeable. They have concerns about inefficiencies in the organisation of a minority of courses, and about issues such as access to adequate computing facilities and dialogue with senior staff when problems arise.

The sixth form curriculum comprises a good range of provision: Advanced Subsidiary (AS), A level and vocational courses, for instance, archaeology, psychology and childcare are available. To render some courses economically viable, they are organised as Adult Education provision. This approach is effective in increasing choice, but leaves some students with evening provision and time on their hands during the day.

Standards at AS and A level have risen markedly since the last inspection. However, average grades for many courses are lower than might be expected from students' attainment at GCSE.

The lessons seen were satisfactory. However, in one, an able student was obtaining correct answers on a new piece of work by an inefficient method; meanwhile, another able student could not fully recall their earlier sixth form work. Elsewhere, after intensive off-site work on a topic, students had less rigorous knowledge than would normally be expected in such circumstances. Teaching does not always spot opportunities to take skills or knowledge further, or to keep past learning active. Over the last year or two, there have been some disruptions to teaching, partly due to staff changes, and students feel that these have not always been handled as well as they might have been.

Leadership and management of the sixth form have been very effective in raising standards, and in providing a wide curriculum. There is a need to improve the efficiency of provision and provide more satisfying channels for the student voice.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement on GCSE courses further, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve the efficiency of provision in the sixth form and establish more effective channels for the student voice.
- Improve teaching quality, particularly pace, challenge and the precision of matching teaching to individual students' needs.
- Strengthen self-evaluation, including departmental self-evaluation and the evaluation of teaching quality.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students enter the school at age 13, having reached around average standards at age 11, but with fewer obtaining the higher levels. Students spend one year in this upper school before national tests at age 14. In the past, results showed weaker progress from age 11. In 2006, results were much better, showing above average progress. This was largely due to spectacular improvement in English; this fed through to achievement in English reaching the top ten percent nationally. Achievement in mathematics and science has remained at much the same levels relative to the national picture for some years.

In 2006, nearly seventy percent of students secured at least five good grades in GCSE or equivalent courses: about ten percent above the national figure. Students' performance shows above average progress being made since age 11, and outstanding progress since age 14, when this group of students had very low national test results. A strong contribution to the overall figure is the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in ICT which counts as four GCSEs, and which eighty percent of students passed. However, if English and mathematics are included, the figure falls to thirty five percent. This is largely due to persistent lower standards in mathematics. Relative to attainment at age 11, about one student in five had a lower grade than expected in English. Students did better in about a third of GCSE subjects. School data show that modest improvement in GCSE results is expected this year, including in English and mathematics. Achievement seen in lessons was generally at least satisfactory and often good. Progress is much the same for boys and girls of all abilities.

Achievement and standards in the sixth form are satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students are confident and have good social skills. They generally get on well with one another and their teachers. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Although a few parents expressed concerns about behaviour, few inappropriate situations were mentioned by students. There are no significant concerns about bullying. Students have a good sense of right and wrong. They feel safe in school, and more so than in the past. Behaviour has improved over the last few years. Students have sensible attitudes to keeping fit and eating well. They enjoy school. They say that the school council is effective and value the way this allows them some say in things. Sixth form students would appreciate more opportunity for their views to impact on the way school arrangements are made. Students have substantial opportunities for work-related learning and are well prepared for continuing education and eventually earning their living. Attendance is satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Some good lessons were seen, with the majority being satisfactory or better; there was very little inadequate teaching. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Classroom relations are generally good and students are keen to learn. In the best lessons, tasks and pace were well matched to students' interests and abilities and they were well motivated. For example, in one English lesson in Year 10, students were skilfully introduced to a poem about how it felt to be in Vietnam after the war with well chosen video clips followed by a task matching complementary sections of text. Students gained a firm appreciation of the context and what the writing was driving at: they achieved well.

In the weaker lessons, pace was sometimes a little slow. Although students enjoyed the way material was presented, and the opportunity to chat about it, the learning points could have been established more quickly. Opportunities were sometimes missed to use methods that would have forced all students to respond to a question. A few students disengage, because teachers are not monitoring them sufficiently frequently. During some lessons, teachers' assessment of individual needs did not pick up well enough who, for instance, could be pushed harder. Occasionally a little more help was needed to support weaker students, for example with creative writing, or to consolidate the speaking and listening skills in a discussion group. Very occasionally, class management is weak. In general, teachers' evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in teaching is underdeveloped.

Marking checks that work has been done and sometimes gives general encouragement. It is not common to find precise guidance about how a piece of work could be improved. Students know what their targets are for the end of each course, and know their current progress grades. They are less sure about exactly what they have to do improve in work on a particular topic.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum in Key Stage 4 includes vocational GCSEs, for example in engineering, and non-GCSE vocational courses, for instance in ICT and science. A higher than normal time allocation is made for English and mathematics to improve achievement. The vocational provision is helpful in facilitating achievement. For example, industrious work was seen underway in health and social care. Good provision is made in preparing students for work and adult life. The school has not yet found curricular arrangements that counter underachievement in mathematics. There is an effective curriculum in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' welfare is supported effectively; they say they are well looked after. Checks on adults to safeguard students are in place. In-class learning support is well deployed. There is appropriate provision for those who are not getting on properly in the classroom. Students' academic progress is monitored and they know how well their progress compares with their targets. They are less sure about how exactly they can improve current pieces of work.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school is well led and managed. It has improved strongly since the last inspection. Behaviour has improved, achievement has improved, and the management of some departments has been put on a firmer footing. The vast majority of parents completing the questionnaire feel that it is well run, although a number feel that more attention could be given to parents' and students' views. This is a vast improvement, but the school is not complacent about parents' remaining concerns. It has responded well to the opportunities and expectations of its status as a Business and Enterprise College, for instance with its focus on work-related learning, although lessons across the range of subjects could sometimes be more enterprising. Senior staff work together well as a team. The senior team recognises that, whilst there are many signs of improving achievement, more needs to be done. At senior level and within departments, staff have not always evaluated shortcomings firmly enough to tackle them squarely. The budget is now in good order. The governing body is effective in ensuring probity, providing wise counsel, and sustaining the school's esprit de corps. The school gives good value for money and is well placed to improve further.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	3

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
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	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 June 2007

Dear students

Inspection of Berwick Community High School, Northumberland, TD15 2JF

Thank you for your help when I visited your school. You made many helpful points in discussion, and I was impressed by many features of the school as I observed you in the dining hall, on the playground, in the sixth form centre, or in lessons.

This is a good school.

In general, the results you achieve at the end of Years 9 and 11 are good, although there is more success in some courses than in others. For example, English results in tests in Year 9 put the school in the top ten percent nationally. Vocational courses help some of you to do well at the end of Year 11. Achievement could be better in some basic courses like English and mathematics. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory; it is better than when the school was last inspected.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most lessons are enjoyable, and many cater for your needs well. Sometimes the pace could be faster and more could be done for those of you who are, for example, eager for something harder.

You get on well together and nearly always work well for your teachers. Behaviour is good. You say that you are happy at school and that you are well looked after. You are provided with a good range of courses. This is particularly so in the sixth form, though there have occasionally been issues in how course arrangements have turned out.

Many of you were very forthright in your evaluation of the school, with convincing argument to support your views. In the main, you are very happy with the way the school does things. The school agrees that it needs to do more to take the views of the sixth form on board.

The vast majority of the nearly 200 parents who completed the questionnaire are now happy about the school and the way it is run. I agree with them that the school is well led and managed by the head and his senior staff. There have been many improvements. Governors keep a careful eye on all that the school does.

I have asked the school to tackle a few things:

- Raise achievement on GCSE courses, particularly in mathematics;
- Improve what is on offer in the sixth form and establish more effective channels for the student voice;
- Improve the quality of teaching;
- Strengthen how the school evaluates its strengths and areas for improvement.

A final point for you – as this is an Enterprise College, try to take the initiative a little more in directing your own learning. Try out some new ideas of your own; let the teacher know when you need help; and take the lead in getting more information for yourselves from books, the internet or by asking teachers well informed questions.

It was a real pleasure to visit your school. I wish you all well in the future.

Jim Bennetts

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Her Majesty's Inspector

**Annex B**