



The Brooksbank School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107579
LEA Calderdale
Inspection number 277783
Inspection dates 12 December 2005 to 13 December 2005
Reporting inspector Ms Honoree Gordon HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Victoria Road
School category	Foundation		Elland
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		West Yorkshire HX5 0QG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01422 374791
Number on roll	1581	Fax number	01422 310945
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs S Bain
Date of previous inspection	11 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs J Watson

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 12 December 2005 - 13 December 2005	Inspection number 277783
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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

Brooksbank school is the largest secondary school in the local authority, with over 1500 students aged 11-18, including over 200 in the sixth form. There are more boys than girls. The school is a specialist sports college. Students come from town and rural areas, with one third from relatively deprived backgrounds. The proportion of students with free school meals, with additional learning needs or who do not have English as their first language is less than usually found. The proportion with statements of educational need is average. The school is predominantly white, but in Year 12 around one in five students are of minority ethnic origin and one quarter do not have English as their first language. Students enter the school with broadly average attainment levels, though there are fewer very able students because of selective schools nearby. The vast majority of students enter the school at the beginning of Year 7, though a number join at sixth form from other schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

There are several good aspects to the education provided at the Brooksbank school: the care, guidance and support for students and the good provision for their personal development. Students particularly enjoy being in a specialist sports college. The opportunities promote confidence, team work and leadership skills. The curriculum meets their needs well and the sixth form is good. The school works well with others to support and extend opportunities for its students. It goes to great lengths to support those who find learning difficult. Parents are happy with the education their children receive.

The school judges itself as good overall. However, inspectors judge overall effectiveness as satisfactory. Standards are now in line with national expectations and all students, including those with additional learning needs, make satisfactory progress. However, students do not make sufficient progress overall in English and mathematics by the time they leave school and other subject results vary too much. The quality of teaching and learning is not as good as the school thinks. Inspectors saw a number of good lessons, but teaching and learning are too inconsistent. Lessons do not always meet students' different needs sufficiently well and the level of challenge is not always high enough. Behaviour in school is good, but in some lessons low-level disruption from a minority of students hinders progress. Some parents and students also identified this as a point of concern.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and good in the sixth form. Since the last inspection, provision for information and communications technology (ICT) has improved and is now good. As yet, managers do not analyse sufficiently how particular groups of students are doing in order to plan for their varied needs and so encourage greater progress. The school provides value for money and has the capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that the sixth form is good. It is well-led and managed. Students enjoy a good curriculum which is continuously updated, together with external partners, to meet a widening range of needs. Students develop well as individuals, and appreciate the particularly harmonious relationships in the sixth form. Teaching is good, so that students of all abilities are confident and work hard in lessons. Study skills are insufficiently developed in Year 12. As a result, students cannot build well in their independent work on what they gain from the lessons. Students are well-supported, and their progress through to Year 13 reflects the clear guidance they get on how to improve. Teachers take care to ensure that they undertake appropriate courses, either at Brooksbank or in partner colleges. There is good support for the great majority who opt to continue into higher education. Standards improved in 2005 and are average overall by the end of Year 13. Achievement is satisfactory. Students are well-prepared for life after school, with a strong emphasis on thinking skills. There

is good scope for leadership and team work through sports and other activities. In recent years too many students were allowed to take courses which were too demanding. This is now being rigorously monitored to reduce the number who do not achieve a grade after two years of study.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that students make faster progress in English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of lessons overall, by ensuring they better meet the needs of different groups of students.
- Further develop the skills of managers in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and the progress students make.
- Ensure that the behaviour of some students does not hold back the learning of others.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school is correct in judging that achievement and standards are in line with national averages, as at the time of the last inspection report. Students enter the school with average attainment levels and all students, including those with additional learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress overall.

Results have risen in line with the national picture and at GCSE there has been significant recent improvement. Students progress well in science and girls make faster progress than girls in schools in similar circumstances do. However, students' progress in mathematics and in English is too slow.

In tests at age 14, students reach standards at or above national average. In science and mathematics the results are good. Less able students make good early progress in mathematics. However, students do not keep up this rate of progress in mathematics in years 10 and 11. Results in English dipped in 2004, but the school's analysis shows improvement since. Boys and girls achieve equally well in these tests, as do students from ethnic minorities.

The improvement in GCSE results noted in 2004 has been maintained. Standards are now average overall, but GCSE results in two core subjects, English and mathematics, are below average. Boys' results are also below national average. Standards in subjects vary but are good in design technology and biology.

Standards in sixth form fluctuate but are generally in line with national averages. Students there make satisfactory progress, but weaker pupils struggle.

As yet the impact of specialist status on standards overall cannot be measured, but the school reaches the targets set by the local authority

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy their education and each others' company and are tolerant of difference so that the school operates as a friendly, orderly community. Relationships with adults are good overall but occasionally too informal, which means that some staff are too accepting of low-level disruption or lack of respect. Overall standards of behaviour are good and there are few exclusions, but there is some immature behaviour in some lessons. Most students follow instructions diligently and work well in lessons. Attendance levels are in line with the national average. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They appreciate the richness of their own and others' culture and are generous fund-raisers for charity. They contribute well to the community through, for example, performances or encouraging senior citizens to use the internet. The school council has a positive impact on students' life. Students act in a safe manner; all say that bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly. Students are aware of healthy lifestyles and participation in extra activities has increased noticeably since the school became a sports college. Students collaborate well and they engage in enterprise activities which contribute positively to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Overall this is satisfactory, although the school judges it to be good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and monitoring records show the positive steps taken to improve the quality of teaching. This means that some consistency is evident in the techniques and methods teachers use. For example, activities in lessons are carefully planned, teachers make clear to students what they will learn and review this at the end of lessons. Students are regularly assessed. This gives them a clear picture of what they need to do to improve, although the day to day feedback to students through marking is not always as helpful. These strategies help students to work purposefully and to understand how well they are doing. However, there is inconsistency in how effective the teaching is. Lessons do not always meet students' needs well. Teachers usually meet the needs of average students and those with additional learning needs effectively, but often could do more to challenge the more able ones. In the best lessons seen teachers ensure that students work hard and they successfully challenge them through skilful questioning and interesting activities. In most lessons teachers make sure students behave well but in a small number of lessons poor behaviour prevents students from learning effectively and in other lessons students who are not concentrating are not always brought back on task. This holds back overall progress in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school rightly judges the curriculum to be good and ensures it meets students' needs. The curriculum meets requirements; it is broad and well- balanced, and there are appropriate vocational courses. Provision for ICT is now good. The school very successfully uses sports college status to enrich and extend learning opportunities in lessons and beyond. There is a wide range of high- quality clubs and other activities, including music and drama and many students take part. Opportunities for gifted and talented students are growing, sometimes in conjunction with universities. However, the school recognises that it could do more for them through the basic curriculum. Good numbers enter modern foreign languages GCSE early and begin advanced courses in years 10 and 11. The personal and social programme provides well for students' personal development and helps them understand how to keep safe and healthy. Some subjects, such as geography, make strong contributions to developing basic skills in literacy and mathematics but this is less evident in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care, support and guidance for students. Pupils appreciate how helpful the teachers and assistants are. Form tutors and year heads know students well and there is a wide range of further pastoral staff for them to go to for help. The Home/ School Liaison Coordinator, who describes herself as 'the mouthpiece of the child', provides excellent support for vulnerable students. Students find the target-setting and review days very helpful to keep them focused and most have a good idea of what they need to do in order to improve, both academically and personally. Unbiased careers guidance ensures students make sensible choices when moving into Year 10 and post-16. Students with additional learning needs are well-supported. The school makes good efforts to motivate those who are disaffected. Health and safety arrangements and procedures to ensure child protection are satisfactory; the school acknowledges the need for wider staff training on some aspects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school considers that leadership and management are good, but inspectors judge them to be satisfactory. The school has made improvements recently, notably through gaining Sports College status. Students can see the improved opportunities and resources. Overall standards improved in 2004, but remain broadly in line with the national average, as at the time of the previous inspection. The headteacher and senior managers have a clear aim: to provide a top quality education for all students. Equality of opportunity is a key value. In many respects they are succeeding and the school improvement plan identifies suitable ways forward. However, the school did not respond

quickly enough in taking action to overcome weaknesses in achievement, notably in English. Some recent changes to provision in this core subject are beginning to show benefit. Governors work hard for the school, but could challenge the school more. The school consults parents and students as part of its self- evaluation processes. It knows itself quite well, but the monitoring of teaching and learning is not sharp enough. In most observations there is more emphasis on what teachers do, rather than how well students learn. Consequently, the school's view of teaching and learning is more positive than results justify. The school now has good systems for reviewing the work of subjects and year groups, but these are not yet used effectively throughout. The approach to evaluating student progress is not sufficiently strong. Middle managers have the responsibility for effecting improvements. As a result, students' experiences vary both within and across subjects, for example in how effectively behaviour is managed or how helpfully work is marked. This leads ultimately to variations in results between subjects.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your school. Your views were very helpful to us. We were also able to read what your parents thought, talk to teachers and to visit some of your lessons. Your parents' questionnaires showed that they are happy with the education you receive. A summary of our main findings is below.

We are satisfied with the education your school provides and how your headteacher leads it and we found a number of good points.

- The school cares, guides and supports you well.
- Your personal development is good; being in a sports college has a lot to do with this. You told us how much this means to you, especially the good range of opportunities in sport.
- The range of subjects is good; it meets your needs well.
- The sixth form is good and it is well led.
- The school goes to great lengths to support those of you who find learning difficult.
- Your behaviour is good and most of you work well in lessons.
- You feel safe at school and there is hardly any bullying; if it happens, it is dealt with.

Your results in tests and examinations are in line with other schools and you all make the sort of progress we would expect you to. This is the same in the sixth form. However, we feel that you could progress faster, so we have made some suggestions to the school. Some of them come not just from what we saw but from what you and your parents said.

- You need to make faster progress in English and mathematics; these skills are important when you leave school.
- Some lessons are better than others; the school needs to keep working at this, so that everyone can achieve their best.
- The school needs to look more at how different groups are doing.
- A few students' silly behaviour spoils some lessons; teachers need to make sure this happens less often.

We know the school can move forward on these things, but it will need your support too, especially to ensure you always do your best in lessons. That way you can all make good progress in the future.