

Colston's Girls' School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 135581 |
| Local Authority | N/A |
| Inspection number | 361458 |
| Inspection dates | 24–25 November 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Lorna Brackstone HMI |

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

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Academy |
| School category | Non-maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Girls |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Girls |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 532 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 107 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Trevor Smallwood |
| Headteacher | Lesley Ann Jones (Principal) |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Cheltenham Road Bristol BS6 5RD |
| Telephone number | 0117 942 4328 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Twenty-six lessons or part lessons were observed and 27 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with students, parents, members of the governing body and both middle and senior leaders. Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at visit notes from the school improvement partner, development planning, governing body minutes, policies and bulletins for parents and carers. The case notes about additional support given to several students were considered. One hundred and sixteen parental questionnaires, 28 staff questionnaires and 122 student questionnaires were returned and these were carefully considered.

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

- What impact has improved leadership and management had on sixth form provision?
- How well are leaders using the new monitoring and tracking systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the academy?
- How much academic progress is made by different groups of students?
- How effective is pastoral care and what impact does it have on the personal development of the students?

Information about the school

Colston's Girls School is a specialist language school which opened in September 2008. Previously a selective independent school, and founded in 1891 by the Merchant Venturer Edward Colston, it is a smaller than average secondary school. However, it is increasing in size year on year. Students in Years 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13 joined the school when it became an academy and thus reflect a fully comprehensive intake. Just under half the girls come from minority ethnic backgrounds but the proportions who speak English as an additional language are below the national average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of girls known to be eligible for free school meals is just below the national average. Very few students join or leave the academy other than at the start of the school year. About one-third of the girls stay for the sixth form with the remainder joining from other schools. Colston's Girls is one of three academies in the city that are sponsored by the Society of Merchant Venturers and there are close links between them.

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors carried out a monitoring visit a year ago and judged it to be making good progress.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Colston's Girls School provides an excellent quality of education. This is endorsed by the vast majority of parents and carers and as one parent explained, 'It's a privilege for my daughter to attend.' The academy's key themes of Achievement, Community, Aspiration and Responsibility are met with aplomb. With her dynamic and visionary leadership, the Principal has passionately embraced the immense change in the status of the school. Central to this has been the drive to maintain the legendary 110-year-old characteristics of a 'Colston Girl'. The Principal has been extremely well supported by her outstanding senior leadership team and an exceptional governing body, all of whom are strategic in their thinking. Self-evaluation is accurate. Parents endorse this strong leadership and as one parent summed up, 'They are top drawer'. For these reasons, the academy has exceptional capacity for sustained improvement.

The personal and academic achievement of the girls is outstanding. They move onto the next stage of their education having gained exceptionally high standards. Colston's 'girls' blossom into extremely mature, sensible and well-disciplined young ladies. They are reflective thinkers who respect their heritage and have a first-hand appreciation and understanding of cultures other than their own. The girls value the first class care, support and guidance they receive which parents praise as 'the personal touch'. The girls appreciate the excellent curriculum which is on offer to them and are proud of the outstanding range of opportunities available. This enables them to pursue their interests and talents and make an impressive contribution to the local and wider community.

Since the monitoring visit, the quality of teaching has significantly improved and the high proportion of excellent teaching ensures that the girls progress at a remarkable pace, enabling them to attain high academic standards. Seniors leaders know that teaching is particularly strong in English, mathematics, science and in modern languages and are clear where performance in lessons needs shifting. Parents endorse that the teaching is generally of high quality and, as one parent summed up, 'The amount of effort that each individual member of staff puts into this school is amazing. I couldn't be happier with my daughter's progress. She is a bright, confident happy young woman who loves the school very much.'

The profile of the middle managers is increasing and senior leaders have worked with them to improve student tracking and profiles. This now ensures that all groups of girls achieve as well as they can. There has been a swift improvement in the effectiveness of the sixth form. Outcomes are quickly improving as the quality of teaching rapidly improves and the senior leadership team is relentless in taking action to bring about further development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the high quality teaching techniques used in English, mathematics, science and modern languages are shared across all subjects.
- Sustain the impetus of improvement in sixth form provision.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

From a starting point just above the national average, the girls make outstanding progress in their learning and attain standards that are exceptionally high. A significant strength of the academy is the way in which it identifies differing ability groups, thus enabling the most able girls to gain the highest grades possible and yet successfully supporting those who find learning more challenging to achieve examination results to be proud of. The manner in which the girls talked proudly of their school and the excellent levels of engagement and motivation displayed in lessons during the inspection illustrate very well how much they enjoy learning at Colston's. For example, girls explained to an inspector how much they enjoyed the discussions they had with their teacher in personal, social, health and emotional education (PSHE). Self-discipline is an extremely strong feature of this academy and is clearly evident as the girls move around school and interact with their friends, members of staff and visitors. Rewards and sanctions are clearly understood and impeccably adhered to. Girls feel safe and know that their problems or concerns about issues either in school or in their home life are thoughtfully considered and actions taken when appropriate. They report that there is very little anti-social behaviour and the vast majority of girls are confident that incidents are dealt with sensitively and promptly. They exemplify the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle by highlighting sensible eating habits and the importance of exercise. Discussions with the parents of drug abusers and young offenders have given them an astute understanding of the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. The respect and value shown to each other's cultures and beliefs are exceptional, making the academy a truly cohesive community. The girls are active participators in the prefect system, assemblies and charity events. They serve the wider community exceptionally well by helping in local primary schools, preparing and distributing Christmas hampers to those less fortunate than themselves and competing in local debating and sporting competitions. By reaching the regional finals of the Young Enterprise initiative with their jewellery company which used recycled buttons, the girls demonstrated that they had developed extremely strong work-place skills. Writing letters to ministers about the rise in university tuition fees, discussions on financial management, and an outstanding attendance level enable the girls to demonstrate an impressive readiness for the 'real world'.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 1 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ | 1 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 1 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 1 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The very positive relationships shared between students and their teachers in lessons ensure that learning is calm and there is no low level disruption. Clear lesson objectives, coupled with identified measures to judge the success of the session, are consistently strong planning features. Activities meet the differing needs of the girls well and very effective strategies are used to ensure every student is fully involved in the lessons. For example, paired and group work ensures that girls support each other. This was well illustrated in a Year 9 food technology session where the girls helped each other to make different types of pasta. In the very best lessons, questions are carefully crafted to challenge even the most able girls and the excellent use of teaching assistants ensures that the needs of those who find aspects of learning problematic are fully engaged. Whilst teaching is generally at least good with much being outstanding, a very small number of lessons lack inspiration.

Assessment is of the highest quality and this ensures that the girls have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to improve. In lessons, there is always time allocated for reflection and peer discussion which is supported by reassurance from skilled staff. The detailed marking of books results in the girls having a secure understanding of what the next steps in their learning should be. Individual targets for improvement are clear and agreed with the students.

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Theatre outings to London and Stratford-upon-Avon and trips to France and Spain make learning memorable and the specialist status is clearly instrumental in ensuring that all girls access a second language. It is impressive that nearly all girls take up the extensive extra-curricular activities, and sporting and musical activities are firm favourites. In fact, one parent explained that the music department is the 'heartbeat' of the academy. The fully inclusive nature of the academy is reflected in the outstanding manner in which it provides individualised programmes for gifted and talented girls and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants provide the highest quality support which is coupled with excellent multi-agency intervention. Parents and carers of girls with particular needs are delighted with the support they receive. One parent explained that the additional support her daughter received 'improves her self-esteem as well as her overall enjoyment of school and learning'. Transition arrangements from primary schools are first class, the successes of which are confirmed by the girls themselves and by their parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 1 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 1 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 1 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Under the inspirational leadership of the Principal, there has been a relentless focus on maintaining the high standards, improving the quality and provision of the sixth form and raising the teaching profile. Senior leaders have a detailed knowledge of how different groups of students perform and implement good strategies to support them. The climate for further improvement is excellent given the high calibre of the vice-principals and key governors. The school community shares this sense of purpose and its members are very proud of its ongoing success. Tolerance and respect are promoted extremely well and any anti-social incidents are rare. The academy safeguards its pupils well, meeting all the current statutory requirements and providing good quality assurance systems and risk assessment checks. Drama and musical productions, prize-giving and the very special Commemoration Day are a few examples of ways in which parents and carers share in academy life and enjoy extremely positive relationships with the school. The outstanding commitment to working in partnership with others is evident not only through the promotion of the language specialism with nearby primary schools, but in the extended links with other academies within the city, a neighbouring shoe shop and the local Polish community. The academy's inclusive approach has far-reaching effects beyond its own community. By visiting their link school in Murcia in Southern Spain, the girls gain confidence in speaking Spanish and experience different customs. They are proud of their purchase of a wind turbine in India which is used to provide work for local women.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 1 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 1 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 1 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

Sixth form

There has been a significant recent increase in the rate at which students make progress. Overall, girls now make good progress relative to their starting points. The examination results in 2009 at both AS and A level indicated that the girls were making broadly satisfactory progress in the majority of subjects. There was rapid and effective intervention by senior leaders to improve performance. As a result, in 2010 progress at AS was good and progress, although not as marked, improved for the girls completing their A level. Variation between subjects decreased and in some popular subjects at A level there was a significant improvement over the previous year. The academy's own data indicate that the current cohorts of girls are on track to meet their challenging targets. In the lessons observed during the inspection, girls made at least good gains in their learning. They show enjoyment in their studies and work well collaboratively and independently. For example, in a Year 12 history lesson, they adopted the role of examiners and worked together to grade A level papers. Girls contribute significantly to the academy community and act as good role models for the younger students in the way they take responsibility and help others. This is evident when they support the learning in lessons lower down the academy. Retention rates are good although attendance over time is variable.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and capitalise well on their very good relationships with the girls. The curriculum has a good range of AS and A level subjects and the academy makes strenuous efforts to ensure the girls get their first choices. At the moment, there are no opportunities available for the girls to work towards other forms of accredited courses. However, the academy is anticipating that greater collaboration with other schools will increase choice. The academy's specialist status plays an important role in ensuring that girls other than linguists study a language. There is good and broad enrichment. Girls are very well cared for and receive excellent academic support

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throughout the sixth form and are prepared very well for their futures. Their progress is well monitored.

The senior leaders intervened quickly following the disappointing examination results in 2009. They sharpened up the target setting for sixth form students and worked closely with subject leaders to plan for improvement where performance had been weak. The accountability of middle leaders is, by this process, being well developed. They also focused professional development on teaching and learning so that teachers became more aware of the need to meet the increasingly disparate learning needs of their girls. Opportunities in the school's academic board to share good practice in sixth form teaching have kept this at the top of the agenda for improvement.

These are the grades for the sixth form

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the sixth form | 2 |
| Taking into account: | 2 |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form | 2 |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are extremely happy with the education their girls receive and comments such as 'Every child should have the opportunity to go to a school like Colston's Girls School' are typical of the responses inspectors received. A small minority of parents and carers indicated that their girls were not well enough prepared for the future but inspectors could not endorse this view. A very small minority of parents and carers considered that the academy did not take account of their suggestions and concerns. However, inspectors found that there were numerous ways in which the academy could be approached with concerns and consultations with staff and members of the governing body were frequent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Colston's Girls School 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 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 116 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 532 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 76 | 66 | 37 | 32 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 84 | 72 | 30 | 26 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 80 | 69 | 33 | 28 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 74 | 64 | 39 | 34 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 67 | 58 | 47 | 41 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 59 | 51 | 48 | 41 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 47 | 41 | 60 | 52 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 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) | 55 | 47 | 34 | 29 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 62 | 53 | 48 | 41 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 61 | 53 | 46 | 40 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 46 | 40 | 54 | 47 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 82 | 71 | 31 | 27 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 84 | 72 | 29 | 25 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

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 all 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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 58 | 36 | 4 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 43 | 40 | 9 |
| Secondary schools | 10 | 35 | 42 | 13 |
| Sixth forms | 13 | 39 | 45 | 3 |
| Special schools | 33 | 42 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 18 | 40 | 29 | 12 |
| All schools | 11 | 42 | 38 | 9 |

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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



26 November 2010

Dear Girls

Inspection of Colston's Girls Academy, Bristol, BS6 5RD

Thank you for making the inspection team and myself so welcome when we inspected your academy recently. We would like to tell you how much we enjoyed our visit and to let you know that you attend an outstanding school. We were very impressed with your exemplary behaviour and you are great ambassadors for Colston's Girls and the community. Nearly all parents and carers who completed the inspection questionnaire were very positive about the quality of education and care you receive.

You attain high standards and make excellent progress in your learning because of your outstanding attitudes and the exceptional relationships you have developed between each other and your teachers. The care, support and guidance you are given are of the highest quality and you feel safe in the knowledge that there are always people there to support you in times of need. Your ability to be reflective thinkers and the way that you are prepared as citizens of an increasingly diverse and complex world is first class. Your founder Edward Colston would be exceptionally proud of you! Other outstanding elements include:

- the leadership and management of the academy
- the quality of teaching and the curriculum you are provided with which help you make such rapid progress in lessons
- the regular and rigorous assessment of your work which ensures that you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve
- the wide range of extra activities that you can and do take part in and your contributions to the life of the Colston's Girls and your local community.

We can see that your Principal and her leadership team, ably supported by the governing body, know exactly what to do to continue to provide an outstanding education for you. However, we have also suggested that the very best methods of teaching should be shared across all subjects and the accelerated improvement in the sixth form be maintained. Thank you once again and, on behalf of the team, I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone

Her Majesty's Inspector

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