



Darrick Wood School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101658
LEA Bromley LEA
Inspection number 276565
Inspection dates 12 December 2005 to 13 December 2005
Reporting inspector Vincent Ashworth HMI

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Type of school | Comprehensive | School address | Lovibonds Avenue |
| School category | Foundation | | Orpington |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 | | BR6 8ER |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01689 850271 |
| Number on roll | 1653 | Fax number | 01689 857257 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr Michael Hewitt |
| Date of previous inspection | 16 October 2000 | Headteacher | Mrs Barbara Rhymaun |

| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
|-----------|--|-------------------|
| 11 to 18 | 12 December 2005 - 13 December 2005 | 276565 |

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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

Darrick Wood School is a larger than average comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-18. There are 1653 students on roll, of whom 343 are in the sixth form. Most students come from White heritage backgrounds and live in the local area. The number of students entitled to free school meals is below average. There are two grammar schools in the locality which select the highest attaining students. However, the demand for places at the school is very high. Students' ability on entry varies from year to year and the complexity of individual needs differs between year groups. Overall, most students' prior attainment is above average. The percentage of students with statements of special educational needs is above the national average. The school has been awarded specialist status in technology.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Darrick Wood School is a good school that provides a high standard of education for all its students. The school is popular and has a good reputation locally. It is a happy school in which students thrive and benefit from the good facilities it offers them. By the time they leave school the large majority of students are well-qualified and have made good progress. Students have a strong sense of pride in their school and develop as confident and articulate individuals who contribute in a very positive way to the wider community. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, with examples of outstanding practice, particularly in English. Most teachers plan their lessons to ensure that all students can play a full and active part. This is not consistently the case across all subjects, in some instances teaching methods are not sufficiently responsive to the wide range of students' individual learning needs. Teachers have high expectations for their students and set challenging targets for them to achieve. However teachers' comments on the steps students need to take to improve their performance are not consistently good across all subjects. The school's specialist status in technology is starting to flourish and the quality of students' learning has been enriched by the facilities and opportunities this affords. The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. The support provided to students with specific learning difficulties is commendable. The headteacher and senior managers provide strong leadership and have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The process of self-evaluation is precise and accurate. Good management, happy and achieving students and a committed staff ensures the school provides good value for money. The school's effective arrangements for quality assurance, rising standards as well as improvements since the last inspection indicate good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The larger than average sixth form provides good education for its students. Standards are good and improving and students' overall achievements are in line with expectations. Good management and highly valued careers support encourages good retention rates. Students have developed good study skills that support their independent learning. However, the rigour in which individual targets are agreed and monitored varies across subjects. Students' personal development and well being are outstanding. They demonstrate high levels of confidence and very good communication skills. A well planned calendar of events maintains students' interest in the wider social and business communities. Visits from external agencies, charity work and educational visits enhance student's experiences and prepare them well for university or the world of work.

What the school should do to improve further

* Ensure that all teachers are confident in using a wider range of teaching methods that cater for a range of students' individual learning needs* Ensure greater consistency

in the quality of teachers' comments about how students can improve their performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school sets challenging targets to encourage both staff and students to aspire to very high standards. In most cases these targets have been met. The school is making good progress in its specialist school targets and this has resulted in improvements in standards and achievement in mathematics and design and technology. Standards achieved in national tests at the end of Year 9 have been consistently above average since the last inspection. In 2004 students' overall progress during Key Stage 3 was satisfactory. Their progress is better in English than in mathematics and science, although more recently students' progress in mathematics has improved significantly. Standards in Key Stage 4 are very high. The number of students who achieve pass grades in at least five GCSE examinations is well above average. Students' attainment in English is particularly impressive. Whilst attainment in mathematics has improved considerably, students could be doing better in science. The overall progress made by all students by the end of Key Stage 4 is good. There are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups of students. Overall students' performance on advanced level examinations in the sixth form is good. In 2005, GCE A-level students achieved excellent results in business and performing arts. Achievement in the sixth form has improved in recent years and is now satisfactory. The proportion of students who achieve the highest grades in advanced level examinations has improved and is now above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development is outstanding. They behave very well both around the school and in lessons. They get on very well with their teachers and value highly all the help and guidance they receive from them. Students are highly motivated and are able to make well-informed and mature decisions about their lifestyle and future prospects. They are respectful of the school's rules and regulations, even if they do not always like them. Most students attend school regularly and permanent exclusions are rare. Unauthorised absence is very low and the school continues to make strenuous efforts to improve any lack of attendance arising from family holidays. Students feel safe in the school and instances of bullying are very rare. There are many opportunities for students to learn about keeping safe, both through the curriculum and the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available to them. The school's specialist status ensures that students develop the skills that future employers will appreciate. Students are appreciative of the school's focus on healthy lifestyles and they are rightly proud of their achievements in team sports. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. Students have excellent social skills and enjoy working together. They

have made many positive contributions to the community, both locally and internationally, for instance through links with a school in Nepal. Students in the sixth form have recently attended the House of Commons to receive their Princess Diana Awards for services to the community. Students in the sixth form also value the opportunities to take on responsibilities through the school's prefect system.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are monitored through observations by middle managers, the senior management team and by external consultants. These observations are systematic and rigorous, providing a clear picture of the overall quality of students' learning and the effectiveness of teaching. The complexity of younger students' needs has increased considerably in recent years and the school is rightly making changes to extend the range of learning and teaching styles which it uses to address these needs. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and these plans include whole class and often individual learning objectives. In most lessons the activities resulting from these plans are well matched to the needs of individual students in a way that will allow them to develop their learning. However, this practice varies across subjects and consequently a number of learners are not always fully challenged during the lesson. Teachers are very successful in managing students' behaviour and maintaining a sense of order in lessons. Their enthusiasm and subject knowledge makes learning interesting and effectively encourages students to give of their best. Regular homework and good use of questioning in lessons ensures teachers are aware of what students know and understand. However, the written feedback on students' work does not always include clear and precise comments about how they could improve their performance. As a result, not all students are clear about what they need to do to achieve higher marks. The teaching and learning for students who access special provision is good because teachers know the students well and learning activities are well matched to their needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum for students aged 11 to 16 is broad and well-balanced. Provision in Years 10 and 11 has been widened since the last inspection to include some vocational courses, but the uptake of these has been low. The school is appropriately planning to enhance this provision as new courses become available nationally. The post-16 curriculum is outstanding. There is a wide range of academic and vocational programmes and the range of technology courses has been expanded in line with the school's specialist status. For example, sixth form students are encouraged to undertake an internationally-recognised professional qualification in computer networking skills.

The school is developing appropriate courses and accreditation to address the increasing complexity of students' needs and interests. The school makes good provision for all learners to develop workplace skills, including the opportunity for all those in Year 10 to undertake a work experience placement. A very wide range of clubs, trips and other activities helps to enrich the curriculum. Many students actively engage in these activities and the school's sports teams enjoy success in a number of inter-school fixtures and leagues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support for all students are outstanding. Learning support staff are very knowledgeable about a wide range of needs, and this is shared across faculties in support of individual students. Liaison between appropriate staff in the school, including the pastoral team who provide mentoring support, ensures that vulnerable children, including those at risk of exclusion, have early intervention and support. Links with outside agencies are very strong and ensure that students have access to specialist support where necessary. Students benefit greatly from the wide range of revision classes and homework clubs made available to them. There is an extensive programme to support and extend gifted and talented and more able students, with strategies for extension work adopted across the curriculum. The school makes excellent links with local primary schools and has set up a highly successful summer school for the new intake. School buildings provide good access for students with restricted mobility and effective systems enable large numbers of students to move around the school safely.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong direction and is well supported by the senior management team and school governors. Staff relationships are good and the whole school shares a common purpose focused on raising standards. As a result of rigorous monitoring and careful analysis of trends, senior managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Managers are aware of the need to ensure that excellent practice in some subjects needs to be shared more widely. The process of self-evaluation is thorough and appropriately self-critical. Governance is outstanding. Governors ask searching questions and challenge managers and staff in the school to aspire to the highest standards. They are highly committed to the school and know it very well. Opportunities for professional development are good and there are effective systems to evaluate the impact of development and training activities. Staff appreciate the good support they receive from senior tutors and senior management. The school is making good progress in implementing workforce reform. The work of heads of faculty is becoming more consistent because of the robust line management structure and improved clarity in the guidance from the leadership team. Leadership and management of the sixth form

are good. The sixth form team is well supported by its learning resource centre. Good links have been established with other providers in Bromley to share good practice.

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 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 | 1 |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | NA | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| 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? | 2 | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | 2 |
| 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

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 | |
| 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 | 1 | |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 | |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 | 1 |

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? | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 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 are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 | |
| 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

On behalf of the inspectors and myself who visited your school on 12 and 13 December, I would like to thank you for your very warm welcome. Many of your parents returned a questionnaire and indeed quite a few telephoned me to talk about what they think about your school. This was also very helpful as I was also able to take their views into account when making judgements. We found that Darrick Wood is a good school and that your teachers and school managers work very hard to make sure you have a happy and fruitful education.

Some of the school's key strengths are that it is extremely caring and supportive and offers you excellent opportunities both personally and academically to achieve good results in your examinations. Nearly all of you are proud to be a member of the school, and demonstrate this in the way you work hard in lessons, show respect for each other and for your teachers and play a full and active part in wider aspects of school life. Teaching is good and in some lessons, for example in English, you really get involved because the teachers know how to capture your imagination. There are many good opportunities for you to learn new skills and develop wider interests that will help you when you leave school. Your school is very well led. The headteacher, governors and staff all have your best interests at heart.

We have asked the school to continue to look at ways of improving teaching so that you are able to enjoy a high quality of learning in all your lessons. We have also asked teachers to make sure that when they mark your work you are given very clear and specific actions that will help you understand how to achieve even higher grades. Once again, thank you for your warm welcome. Your rousing singing of a Christmas carol at school assembly will stay as a fond memory for those of us who heard it!