



Pate's Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115754
LEA Gloucestershire
Inspection number 279669
Inspection dates 12 October 2005 to 13 October 2005
Reporting inspector Peter Limm HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Princess Elizabeth Way
School category	Voluntary aided		Cheltenham
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Gloucestershire GL51 0HG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01242 523 169
Number on roll	949	Fax number	01242 232 775
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Richard Kemp

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	12 October 2005 - 13 October 2005	279669

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one HMI and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Pate's Grammar School is an average sized mixed selective grammar school with an even distribution of boys and girls. It is a voluntary aided Language College which is supported by the Pate's Foundation. It moved into new accommodation in 1996. It serves a wide geographical area with admissions from more than 50 primary schools. A significant majority of students come from more advantaged social backgrounds and the proportion of students entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. Relatively few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and the proportion for whom English is an additional language is low. The vast majority of students from Year 11 continue in the school's sixth form and move on to higher education. The school is extremely popular and is oversubscribed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pate's provides an outstanding education for its students, a view shared by the school, and in doing so enables them to become confident, mature and successful young people. The students attain consistently high results in public tests and examinations and make good progress in the main school and excellent progress in the sixth form. The school is valued highly by parents, who also praise the very high quality of care the school provides for all students. The quality of teaching is excellent in the sixth form and good overall in the main school. Some teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 does not engage students actively enough in lessons. The curriculum and the impressive range of other activities meet students' needs very well and students enjoy school life and the exciting challenges it offers. Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The behaviour of students and their attitudes to hard work are exemplary. The school is very well led by the headteacher, who gives the school clear direction and vision. Leadership and management in the rest of the school are good and excellent in the sixth form. However, the school's performance management process is not rigorous and assessment is not consistent enough in Key Stages 3 and 4. There has been sound improvement since the last inspection and the school has good capacity to make these further improvements. The school's excellent resources are used most effectively to enhance standards and the quality of the environment. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are outstanding, again a view shared by the school. Students' attitudes to learning are outstanding and they enjoy being at school. They make excellent progress in their academic work and consistently attain very high standards. This is a result of excellent teaching, support and guidance. They take an active part in the wide range of exciting activities outside lessons and are keen to organise a host of school activities as well as help primary school pupils in their reading. Students are very good role models for younger students and take an active role in ensuring that those in Years 7 and 8 are happy, feel safe and have an older 'buddy' to talk to. An increasing number of students gain entry to Oxford or Cambridge and the majority are accepted at their first choice universities. Leadership and management in the sixth form are outstanding and pupils benefit from rigorous monitoring of achievement, help and guidance on choices for higher education routes and careers and a curriculum, which meets their needs very effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

Improve achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 by:

- refining the quality of some teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 to engage students more actively in lessons
- ensuring a consistent approach to assessment in the main school
- ensuring the performance management process is more consistently rigorous.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' achievement is good and standards are very high throughout the school. The school is consistently ranked amongst the top ten schools in the country in terms of the percentage of top grades and average points scores both at GCSE and A-level. Pupils make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. The attainment of students when they enter the school is very high and at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2005, 97 per cent of students achieved Level 7 in science and in maths 77 per cent attained Level 8. In English the test is now taken in Year 8 but results in 2005 were not as expected, resulting in an appeal for re-marking. At GCSE 100 per cent of students attained 5 A*-C passes but the ability of pupils when they joined the school indicates that there is further scope to improve the proportion attaining A* grades. Girls and boys perform equally well and students with learning difficulties make good progress. Students in the sixth form make excellent progress and attain outstanding results, with the school in the top 15 per cent of schools in 2004 for the value it adds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. There are very good opportunities for students to reflect about ethical and moral issues in a range of curriculum areas and in assemblies. Excellent weekly exhibitions in the library reflect local and world issues and are linked to appropriate further reading materials for all ages. Spiritual development is good and students are encouraged regularly to explore their beliefs and values and to communicate their feelings in a variety of ways such as through music, art and drama. The school has an international ethos and there are significant overseas visits beyond Europe, for example an exchange with a school in China and sports tours to South America and Australia. Linguists organise their own work experience placements in Europe. Students' attitudes and behaviour are exemplary and lead to very high levels of participation across the school, such as in excellent quality house activities, mentoring and counselling, clubs and community work. There are two or three drama productions a year and almost all the technical side is devolved to a student technical team. The lower, middle and sixth form school councils involve many students and their ideas are listened to and often acted upon, such as the creation of a fitness studio. Students adopt healthy lifestyles and the vast majority are involved in sports, outdoor pursuits and fitness related activities provided by the school. The broadening enterprise education and work-related learning programmes supplement well other school provision to prepare students effectively for becoming active, responsible and productive citizens.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are good overall, a view shared by the school, and outstanding in the sixth form. The most effective lessons were those where students were engaged actively in challenging activities, as in Year 7 where students generated a lively inquiry and discussion about the likely impact on London of the 2012 Olympics. In the less effective, but still satisfactory, lessons there was a lack of clarity about expected learning outcomes, a slower pace and less opportunity for students to be involved in challenging group work. Students are willing and enthusiastic learners and they develop positive relationships with their teachers. There has been some improvement since the last inspection in the way teachers use assessments to inform planning and target setting. Good practice was seen in physics where results from Key Stage 3 tests were used effectively to set challenging targets for GCSE. Nevertheless, there remains a lack of consistency in the way assessment and target setting is addressed across the main school. The school development plan rightly identifies this as an area for improvement, along with the quality of some teaching. In the sixth form, students are very effectively challenged to produce excellent work and achieve very high standards. Sixth formers flourish where the cut and thrust of intellectual argument, debate and creative endeavour constantly expands the boundaries of what they can achieve. It is the frequent presence of these factors that leads to the judgement that sixth form teaching is outstanding, compared with the school's more modest view that it is good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's curriculum and its related activities are outstanding. The curriculum is well planned and provides a broad and balanced range of subjects to age 16 and a wide menu of AS and A-Level subjects post-16. A Year 7 enrichment and skills course designed to challenge and stimulate students' particular interests and promote broader approaches to learning is a feature of the main school curriculum. The school's policy of students taking their National Curriculum tests in English in Year 8 means they are able to follow a broader and more interesting English course in Year 9. In Key Stages 3 and 4, students can choose from a wide range of modern foreign languages and early entry to GCSE allows some students the opportunity to study additional languages. The school provides an exceptional range of enrichment opportunities for students and they respond very positively with high levels of involvement. For example, there are language courses in China, expeditions, work experience placements in Europe, a Combined Cadet Force contingent, wide-ranging musical, dramatic and sporting activities including foreign tours, and field courses.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support of students is outstanding overall. Students benefit from personal, health, social and citizenship lessons, which ensure they are well informed on matters of health and safety awareness, drugs and sex education as well as how to be a good citizen. The school works hard to prepare students effectively to make informed decisions on options and course programmes at key points of transition. Students feel their teachers and other staff care about them and are approachable should they have any problems with work or personal issues. Parents agree that the school provides excellent support for students. Careers advice starts in Year 8 and, from Year 9, a broad programme of parents' evenings, individual feedback to students and interviews begins and is supported very well by parents. There are excellent arrangements for the transition from primary school and into the sixth form where induction courses and social activities ensure students get to know the school or sixth form well and settle quickly. There are very effective links with a range of local agencies involved in promoting students' health, safety and welfare.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are good overall and excellent in the sixth form. The headteacher is an excellent role model for other leaders in the school and provides a clear vision, strategy and sense of direction. He has enabled the school to become more outward looking and open minded about embracing well-considered initiatives. His collaborative style has engaged governors, staff, parents and pupils in identifying suitable priorities for school improvement. These plans need to identify clearer more measurable targets so that change and development can be measured and evaluated effectively. The senior team has benefited from his leadership and now has the capacity to ensure priorities are addressed effectively. The school's self-evaluation is good and enables the school to focus clearly on the key areas for improvement. Governors are strongly committed to the school and know its strengths and areas for development well. They fulfil their responsibilities effectively, balancing trust in the headteacher with critical challenge when required. Financial procedures are robust and governors take an active part in budget production and monitoring. They ensure that the school provides good value for money. Leadership and management by other staff are never less than satisfactory and mostly good, but there is too much inconsistency. The quality of departments' annual self-reviews varies and performance management is patchy.

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?	1	1
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	1
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	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
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

Pate's Grammar School Princes Elizabeth Way Cheltenham Gloucestershire

14th October 2005

Dear Students,

Following our visit to your school, we would like to tell you about our findings. I am sure you will not be surprised to know we decided that Pate's is an outstanding school. Only a few things need to be done better and the staff are well placed to improve these.

You, the students, are one of the main strengths of the school. Your behaviour and attitudes to hard work are exemplary. You make the most of the school's outstanding provision by involving yourselves fully in events. You always want to do your best and you are a credit to the school.

Your teachers help you attain consistently high results and make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 and excellent progress in the sixth form. Lessons are usually well taught and especially so in the sixth form. The school cares very well for your needs and provides you with excellent guidance and support when you require it. The school is very well led by your headteacher. He is supported well by the governors and other staff.

The few things we have asked the school to attend to are these:

- more of your teachers need to plan lessons that engage you actively rather than let you sit listening for too long
- departments need to adopt a more consistent approach to marking your work, assessing your progress and setting you just the right targets to help more of you to achieve the best results you can
- review staff performance more rigorously and set each other challenging targets in the same way they set you targets.

Thank you for helping to make our visit so enjoyable.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Limm HMI Lead Inspector