



Cheltenham Bournside School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115769
LEA Gloucestershire
Inspection number 279676
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Anthony Shield AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Warden Hill Road
School category	Foundation		Cheltenham
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Gloucestershire GL51 3EF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01242 235555
Number on roll	1801	Fax number	01242 226742
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Ted Beard
Date of previous inspection	22 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Gorman Stafford

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 22 February 2006 - 23 February 2006	Inspection number 279676
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bournside School and Sixth Form Centre is a larger than average comprehensive school, situated on the outskirts of Cheltenham. It has specialist status as a visual arts college. The student population is largely White British, with comparatively few students from other ethnic heritages. The social background of students is above average. The school is popular with parents 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: 2

Cheltenham Bournside School is a good school, with some outstanding features. Standards are significantly above average and students make good progress. The school is ambitious for further improvement, and given the recent progress made, is very well placed to improve further. Students' personal development is outstanding and their growing maturity is reflected in their very positive attitudes to school, and the enthusiasm with which they contribute to the school community.

The school's visual arts status is enhancing the school's work, making an excellent visual contribution around the school, but also acting as a catalyst for productive partnerships in the community. Students and staff get on very well with each other, and there is a strong work ethic throughout the school. The excellent curriculum is enriched by a range of well supported extra-curricular activities.

Good and sometimes inspiring teaching ensures that students make increasingly good progress as they move through the school. However the proportion of students reaching the highest grades at GCSE is lower than might be expected. This is because work set in lessons is not always closely matched to individual needs, particularly for the most able. In addition, the school has rightly identified providing more opportunities for students to develop their learning independently of the teacher as a priority.

Leadership and management are effective in providing a strong drive for further development. The school knows itself well and has good management systems in place to check on developments. A committed team of governors offers both challenge and support. It works very effectively in partnership with others to promote students' well being. The school accurately evaluates its own effectiveness as good, and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Inspectors confirm the school's view that the school's sixth form is outstanding. A-level results are high and reflect the excellent progress made by students, who conduct themselves maturely and are enthusiastic about their learning. They enjoy an outstanding curriculum and an extensive range of enrichment activities. Students enjoy being in the sixth form, and rightly feel they have excellent guidance. Teaching is also excellent. Leadership and management of the sixth form by the headteacher and his team are outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve overall progress, particularly for the most able
- Improve learning by providing more opportunities for students to work and solve problems independently and always ensuring that work set in lessons matches the abilities of all students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Standards throughout the school are good and both GCSE and A-level results have been consistently significantly above the national average in recent years. Students achieve well, building progressively on their above average attainment on entry in Year 7. Through Years 7 – 9 progress is satisfactory, and better in mathematics than English or science. Test results in English at this stage have been less consistently good, particularly amongst higher attainers. However this is being tackled effectively and current standards of Year 9 students indicate that they are on track to do well this year in all three subjects.

Progress in Years 10 and 11 have been improving and is now good. While there was some underachievement in both 2003 and 2004, particularly in design and technology and modern foreign languages, this is no longer the case. GCSE results in 2005 improved and the current attainment of Year 11 students indicates a further significant rise in overall results. This is because the wide variation in subject performance has been eliminated. Subjects in which students achieve particularly well include mathematics, art, history and geography. In GCSE English, students have largely made up any ground lost in earlier years and overall attainment is significantly above average. Challenging targets for students' achievements overall have been consistently met or exceeded. However the percentage of students reaching the highest grades A or A* has been lower than average. Although girls reach higher standards, boys tend to make greater progress as they move through the school. Students with learning difficulties also make good progress.

Standards in the sixth form are high. A-level results have been significantly above average and most students achieve results well above their targets. In recent years students have made significantly better progress than students in other schools and colleges both locally and nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Very good relationships and a positive climate for learning within the school contribute significantly to students' outstanding personal development and well-being. Students enjoy school; they have a good sense of belonging, and are confident learners. They willingly participate in all the school offers, throw themselves enthusiastically into extra-curricular activities, and particularly enjoy the exceptionally wide range of sporting activities. Attendance had been declining, but the school has been successful in tackling this and attendance is now excellent.

The school effectively stresses the importance of respect for others. It is a very orderly and safe place because students behave very well, and relationships are mutually respectful. Students behave responsibly, especially when safe practice, for example, in science laboratories, is important. The school council has embraced a healthy eating

campaign although not all students have found it easy to give up their unhealthy snacks at break times.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally strong, particularly the cultural aspect, reflecting the school's visual arts status. Students have undertaken projects alongside a range of professional artists, giving them an acute insight into the world of work. They show a refreshing commitment towards helping others, for example in the activities Year 10 students undertake alongside pupils from the neighbouring special school. They take opportunities to take responsibility seriously, for example as prefects or members of the school council. Students also participate successfully in debating and public speaking competitions, which equips them with skills that will serve them well in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students make good progress because of the good and sometimes inspiring teaching. Their learning is characterised by very positive attitudes, supportive relationships and a strong work ethic. Within this atmosphere students are confident to answer questions, share their ideas and seek help when they find work difficult. Marking is used effectively to help students improve their work. The most effective teaching is characterised by a brisk pace, challenging tasks and a range of activities, which both enthuse and motivate students. As a result, learning in most lessons is both purposeful and meaningful. Some outstanding practice was observed. In one Year 11 art lesson, the teacher's confident approach, probing questions and careful management of the learning encouraged students to think more deeply and solve problems independently of the teacher. Less effective teaching offers students fewer opportunities to work in this way. Some teaching also fails to offer sufficient challenge for all students by not ensuring that work is carefully matched to their prior attainment. The more able students are usually most affected by this. However, work for the less able is well planned and supported. Discipline is firm but fair and classrooms are relaxed, happy and mostly productive environments. Teaching in the sixth form is routinely very good and often excellent so that students learn very effectively. Students' work is accurately assessed by teachers whose detailed understanding of the examination requirements enables them to provide very well focused and individually tailored guidance.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Students enjoy and benefit from the challenges of an outstanding and well constructed curriculum, which fully meets statutory requirements. The awarding of both Artsmark Gold and Sportmark is indicative of the breadth of the school's curriculum. Students commented that they particularly enjoy the variety of opportunities available. Large

numbers of students opt to study an art and design subject, including film studies. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is adapted effectively to meet the needs of some students who find the academic curriculum challenging, and a number of workplace qualifications are available. Students of all ages with learning difficulties and disabilities are effectively supported. Provision for the gifted and talented is less well developed and the school has rightly identified this as a priority. There is a well structured programme of enterprise activities, and learning about the world of work is a strong feature. Students appreciate the exceptional range of extra-curricular activities, which enhance and extend their learning, many of which are portrayed on the school's excellent website.

In the sixth form, a very wide range of courses is available, with an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. These contribute significantly to the sixth form's high rate of recruitment from other schools. The sixth form does not waste resources duplicating high quality courses available locally, but provides a small vocational programme proportionate to the needs of those students who wish to continue their studies at Bournside.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school's effective arrangements for the care and guidance of students enable them to feel safe and well looked after. Staff show considerable commitment to this aspect of provision, and the school gives much attention to the fact that every child is important. The school responded positively, following consultation with students, to a greater focus on alcohol abuse, adapting the curriculum appropriately. The well established house system has been effective in creating a strong family atmosphere within a large school. However, this is being changed because the school recognises that a pastoral care system based on year groups will provide a sharper focus, particularly in relation to academic monitoring and guidance.

Students are confident that the rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively, and reported that they always know they will get help when needed, both with work and personal issues. Vulnerable students are well supported, drawing on external specialist support when necessary. Students' progress is carefully checked and intervention is swift when potential underachievement is spotted. Students particularly appreciate the support given by teachers in deciding their subject options. Guidance and support in the sixth form are outstanding. Students have very good relationships with their mentors who closely monitor their progress to ensure they achieve very well. Very experienced teachers provide high quality guidance on higher education choices.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Good leadership and management of the school have brought about a steady improvement in students' achievement in recent years. At all levels, managers work well together. They concentrate their efforts effectively on raising standards and achievement, as well as on supporting the personal development of all students. The work of the arts school has made an increasingly effective impact on the work of the whole school because of resourceful and imaginative leadership. The school makes exceptional efforts to ensure that students work in an atmosphere that is free from harassment, and they enjoy considerable equality of opportunity. When self-evaluation indicates weaknesses, the leadership team is quick to respond. They identify likely causes, and take action so that shortcomings are effectively addressed.

Subject leaders work effectively to bring about improvements in performance and the quality of teaching within their teams. They are playing an increasingly effective role in school self-evaluation and improvement. Alongside senior managers, they conduct thorough biennial reviews. These vary in quality, and not all make an effective contribution to school improvement, but some, for example in history and mathematics, are exemplary.

Governors play an active part in policy making and strategic planning. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and, with the headteacher, set a clear direction for all aspects of the school's work. Over recent years, the headteacher, governing body and leadership team have shown a very good capacity to lead and manage continuing improvements. Financial management is secure.

The school has the confidence of its parents, and many are very positive. As one commented to inspectors 'I cannot speak highly enough of the staff who have supported my daughter all the way through the school and given her such a good start to her adult life'.

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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?	2	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	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	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
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	

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	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
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	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?	2	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	
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	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

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when we recently visited your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to you and were impressed by the sensible way in which you answered our questions. It is clear that most of you enjoy being at Bournside and think it is a good place to be.

Here are some of the main findings from our report:

• you are taught well and as a result are making good progress • the sixth form offers you outstanding opportunities to excel • the school's status as an arts college is providing excellent opportunities across the visual arts • many of you develop excellent personal and social skills, which help prepare you well for your future beyond school • the curriculum is very well planned and there is an excellent range of clubs and enrichment activities • the headteacher and senior team carry out their responsibilities well.

These are the things that could be better:

• standards are improving, but we think that more of you could achieve the highest grades at GCSE • work in lessons is not always matched to your individual need and you do not get enough opportunities to solve problems and work independently of the teacher.

Thanks you once again for your courtesy during our visit. Good luck with your work in the future!