



# Pittville School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 115772  
**LEA** Gloucestershire  
**Inspection number** 279677  
**Inspection dates** 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Peter Limm HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Albert Road
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Cheltenham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Gloucestershire GL52 3JD
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01242 524787
<b>Number on roll</b>	731	<b>Fax number</b>	01242 228750
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Christine Sharpe
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Julie Winterman

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22 February 2006 - 23 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 279677
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pittville is a smaller than average secondary school. It serves a disadvantaged area within Cheltenham. The majority of students are of White British heritage. Attainment on entry to the school is very low overall, although there is a full range of ability. The number of students with free school meals is above the national average and the number with learning difficulties and disadvantages is well above. There are more girls than boys. Pittville became an arts college in 2005 with a specialism in performing arts.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Pittville School provides a satisfactory education for its students. Since its last inspection, the school has faced increasing pressures through changes in leadership, the admission of students with a wider range of needs, greater mobility of students, lower attainment on entry, and the loss of staff in key subjects. The current headteacher provides strong leadership and has begun to address these challenges successfully. Governors and senior managers also judge the school's effectiveness to be satisfactory and have a clear and accurate view of its strengths and the areas that need improvement. Although standards remain low, students are now making better progress to achieve appropriately stretching targets in most subjects. The school has improved its monitoring and tracking of students but assessment procedures are not consistently applied across departments. Behaviour is generally satisfactory and most students demonstrate sensible attitudes to work and learning. Students enjoy school and display a refreshing loyalty to it, feeling let down when some of their peers behave inappropriately. Nevertheless, attendance and punctuality continue to be unsatisfactory. Students feel they are given good support in lessons and in making important option choices and career decisions. The flexible curriculum meets the needs of all students effectively and enables them to be involved positively in school activities. Teaching is satisfactory and good in some departments, but often does not challenge pupils enough. The best teaching practice could be shared better across the school. Except for providing a daily act of collective worship, the school has met its targets from the last inspection. The school has the capacity to improve further and it now provides satisfactory value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- make teaching in the weaker subjects more challenging, and improve the effectiveness of classroom and subject management
- improve attendance and punctuality
- apply assessment procedures more consistently across the school to enable all students to achieve their targets.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The attainment of students on entry to the school is well below the national average and, although students make expected progress during both key stages, overall standards remain low. Analysis of the national test results in 2005 shows students from Year 9 made broadly satisfactory progress, with higher attaining students making good progress in mathematics. The GCSE results in 2005 were very disappointingly lower than in 2004 but the school has acted promptly to address the main reasons for this: poor curriculum decisions made by the school in 2003 which resulted in too little curriculum time in some subject areas; poor attendance of a number of students who were inappropriately placed on the GNVQ ICT course; and rapid turnover in staff in key departments. Standards reached by higher attaining students in 2005 were in line

with expectations and are now good. Inspection evidence shows that students now make at least satisfactory progress in lessons in both key stages. The school's tighter focus on using assessment data to help improve teaching and learning is resulting in consistently better teaching and higher standards of work. Targets are realistically challenging and students are now making satisfactory progress towards achieving them. This is especially so for middle ability students, as the school has worked hard to tackle the legacy of underachievement within this group.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

The personal development and well-being of students is satisfactory. Students are generally attentive in lessons and show particular enthusiasm in practical subjects such as performing arts. They are keen to participate in the good range of extra-curricular activities. Behaviour is generally satisfactory. However, students feel let down by a few of their peers who are disruptive in some lessons. The school has worked hard on managing anti-social behaviour, but a significant minority of students feel that incidents are not always dealt with effectively. The rate of fixed period exclusions is high. Although attendance rates are rising, they are still below national averages and too many students are often late. Students value the healthy eating options on offer in the dining hall and have access to a good range of sporting and other healthy activities. Students are prepared adequately for their future economic well-being by being encouraged to think about work related and financial issues in a number of lessons. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Themes such as 'thinking positively' are used well to encourage students to reflect on their work and lives. Students are willing to make positive contributions to the school, for example, through the school council and taking part in concert productions, but not all teachers offer enough opportunities in lessons for students to think for themselves and work independently.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are generally well structured, following the common four-part school format. Systematic monitoring by the senior management team has led to an accurate analysis of the quality of teaching and learning across the school, and effective action is taken to support staff experiencing difficulties. However, pockets of weak teaching remain in some subject areas where there is a lack of appropriate challenge. Good teaching was observed in some subjects, including science, history, English, religious education (RE) and information and communication technology (ICT). In these lessons, the interest of the students was maintained throughout by well planned and enthusiastic teaching. Classes were generally well managed but in some lessons, mainly in Key Stage 3, poor behaviour from some students undermined learning and progress. Students benefit from good

approaches to assessment in some subjects, such as history, science and ICT, but such methods are not applied consistently across the school. The recently introduced half-termly assessment of students' progress in all subjects is a good initiative that is helping to identify underachieving students at an early stage, so that effective interventions can be made to improve standards. The impact of this is now being demonstrated in the quality of some students' work. Teaching assistants provide good support to students with learning difficulties.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The broad and balanced curriculum meets the needs of all students well, although the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship. There is a good choice of options at Key Stage 4. Beyond the core subjects, students can study the three sciences as separate subjects and an additional modern foreign language. Students can also choose from a good range of vocational courses. The school provides an alternative curriculum for those students who cannot access the full curriculum and involves a work placement and work in the community for three days per week. This experience is focused firmly on preparing students for adult life. ICT is not used effectively to support learning across the curriculum. Very good links have been established with the local college of further education and with Education and Business in Partnership (for example, Super Learning, and Challenge of Industry Days). Collaboration with local schools has enhanced the programme of enrichment courses. Students are encouraged to attend a wide variety of clubs and other extra-curricular activities that fully cater for a wide range of interests (from chess to circus skills). Following the school's designation as a specialist performing arts college, many students are now involved in drama and other performance activities and these are having a noticeable effect on improving self-esteem and confidence. These performances serve to enhance the reputation of the school locally and they are well supported by students and parents.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The quality of care, support and guidance provided by the school is satisfactory. The school is rightly proud of its caring ethos and provides good support to students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Appropriate arrangements for child protection are in place and key staff are vigilant of the needs of vulnerable students. The school has forged good links with external agencies to support its work. Teachers pay due attention to health and safety. Although some teachers give students helpful guidance on how to improve their work, there is not a consistent approach throughout the school. This means that students are not always given enough help either in lessons or through marking to know what they need to do to improve. Support is carefully targeted at those students with learning difficulties and this enables them to make satisfactory progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides strong leadership and demonstrates a good strategic vision for the school. Following the last inspection, the school had a number of headteachers in quick succession and progress was limited. However, over the past two years, with the reorganisation and development of the senior and middle management teams, the capacity to bring about improvement is being strengthened throughout the school and is good. This has led to the introduction of a number of initiatives that are beginning to have a positive impact on students' well-being, individual progress and improved standards of work. Quality assurance procedures are being fully implemented to ensure the initiatives are effective. This has led to some good practice being disseminated across the school, although the process needs to be driven forward more urgently. Subject management remains weak in some areas. The growing strength in leadership and management is demonstrated by the school's successful application for specialist status as an arts college. A supportive and effective governing body has aided these recent achievements and has set suitably challenging targets for improvement. The views of students, parents and members of the community are sought on a regular basis and acted upon sensibly. The school's improvement plan and self-evaluation procedures are having a positive impact on improving the quality and rigour of departmental leadership and management. Day-to-day management is effective and resources are efficiently managed. The school has managed its finances prudently to erase a large budget deficit and it now provides satisfactory value for money.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Dear Students

Following our visit to your school, we would like to tell you about our findings. All of you, and the staff, made us very welcome. We particularly liked talking with you. You were friendly and impressed us with the way you can think reflectively about the school. You told us honestly what you thought and showed us that you want the school to do well.

Your school is satisfactory and is getting better. The headteacher and other senior staff are introducing interesting approaches to help the school provide you with a good curriculum and lessons that motivate you to do your best. Teachers are well aware that most of you, and your parents, feel let down by the anti-social behaviour of some students and they are trying their best to help improve matters. They know that you enjoy most of your lessons and that you appreciate the good range of activities you can be involved in. Some lessons are not stimulating enough and we have asked the school to make sure all lessons are suitably challenging from now on.

Although standards remain low, you are making better progress to achieve your targets and to improve results. Your teachers and support staff help you to focus more on what is required to do well, although some of the marking and feedback is not giving you clear enough guidance on how to improve. A significant number of you need to make more effort to attend school and be more punctual.

Thank you for helping to make our visit interesting and enjoyable.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Limm HMI, Lead Inspector