



# Gosford Hill School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 123241  
**LEA** Oxfordshire LEA  
**Inspection number** 281440  
**Inspection dates** 2 May 2006 to 3 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Stuart Charlton AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Oxford Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Kidlington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		OX5 2NT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01865 374971
<b>Number on roll</b>	1196	<b>Fax number</b>	01865 841029
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr Nick Baines
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 April 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Jones

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 19	2 May 2006 - 3 May 2006	281440

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors

## **Description of the school**

Gosford Hill is of average size with a sixth form of 215. School rolls in the area are falling and this is beginning to have an impact on admissions. The majority of students come from Kidlington which has negligible unemployment. Attendance is generally good. The attainment of students on entry to the school is close to the national average. The school has a learning support unit (LSU). In September 2003 the school was awarded specialist status in mathematics and computing.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Overall this is a satisfactory school with many strengths. It provides sound value for money and through the drive and direction set by the headteacher it is in a good position to further improve its performance. The inspection team fully agree with the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. Most parents agree that the school provides a safe and secure climate for learning. A significant strength of the school is the work done by the LSU. Good systems have been established through which students are effectively guided and supported to ensure that their needs and aspirations are met. The clear vision and direction provided by the headteacher have enabled the school to make significant improvements in the standards attained in public examinations since 2003. Good community and partnerships links have been developed to enhance the curriculum.

A re-organisation of the senior leadership team has clarified roles so that senior staff are beginning to contribute more effectively to the strategic development of the school. The governing body does not fully challenge the way in which the school operates to ensure that it meets all aspects of its statutory responsibilities through systematic monitoring of its provision. Whole school policies are not always applied consistently within, and across, subjects. There are good systems to analyse information about students' progress but these are not used consistently by all staff to drive up achievement. Opportunities are missed in lessons and in assemblies to develop the spiritual awareness of students.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Many students enter the sixth form with GCSE grades which are lower than would be acceptable as the norm by many other schools. They attain standards in AS and A2 examinations which are very close to the national average. This represents good achievement and is based on good teaching with strong and effective leadership and management of the provision. The curriculum on offer is well matched to students' needs and their aspirations and the school has effective systems in place to ensure that those for whom it cannot cater are appropriately directed to other institutions. The school does not fully meet its statutory obligations to provide religious education in the sixth form.

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

- Use the outcomes of monitoring within all levels of management, including the governing body, to ensure consistency in implementing agreed whole school policies.
- Improve the use of assessment data by all staff to ensure that students are suitably challenged and make better progress.
- Ensure that a greater range of opportunities is identified to develop students' spiritual awareness in lessons, assemblies and other activities.

- Ensure full compliance with statutory regulations for religious education in the sixth form.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Generally students' achievements are satisfactory. In 2005, the school's results in both Key Stage 3 standard attainment tests (SATs) and in GCSE were close to the national average. The school's results declined to a low in 2003 since when there has been significant improvement and in 2005 the school fully met its targets. Further challenging targets have been set for 2006 and the school is on track to meet these. Since 2003, the overall pass rates in AS and A2 examinations have been good, although the average points score per candidate was lower than the national average because fewer students than would be expected attained the higher grades. However, a significant proportion of students are accepted into the sixth form with GCSE grades which are lower than would be accepted as the norm by many other schools. This represents good achievement overall. Students with learning needs and disabilities and those with English as an additional language undertake at least part of their timetable in the LSU/Curriculum Support department. Consequently they make good progress due to the effective support which is provided.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Overall, students' personal development and well being is good. Their behaviour is generally good and they adopt safe practices. The school encourages them to adopt a healthy lifestyle, but some say that they do not always take note of this in their life out of school. Students state that bullying is rare and that any instances are dealt with effectively. Generally students enjoy their lessons and attendance improved again last term so that it is now good overall. However, despite the efforts of staff there are still instances where punctuality to lessons could be better. This is not helped by the rather dispersed nature of the school site. All students make a positive contribution to the community through work placements. In the sixth form, students are very actively involved in the community through a wide range of links and provide support in sports clubs for the disabled and also in primary schools. Across the school, students develop appropriate literacy skills to prepare them for later life but the development and application of their numeracy skills are less well structured. Students' moral and social development is satisfactory overall, but there are missed opportunities in lessons and assemblies to fully develop their spiritual and cultural awareness. Exclusions are used appropriately and fully meet requirements.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and as a result students are making the progress which would be expected. The teaching and learning in the sixth form are good and students achieve well. In the LSU, students receive effective small group teaching which enables them to achieve well.

There are many examples of good teaching and learning identified by the school and during the inspection. In the most successful lessons the teachers have high expectations and the students demonstrate good attitudes and behaviour. The teachers also explain, in detail, what students are expected to learn, the lessons are planned effectively using a wide range of teaching styles and the students' understanding is evaluated. In discussions, the students were able to explain what makes these lessons enjoyable. The sixth form students have very good attitudes to their learning and they share good relationships with their teachers.

In lessons where teaching was satisfactory or, in a small number of cases, unsatisfactory, the teachers' classroom control was not as strong and students were not fully engaged. The tasks set were often inappropriate and this led to the students not being sufficiently challenged and their learning was restricted.

Students with learning difficulties and disabilities, or for whom English is an additional language, are well known to all teachers and receive suitable support in lessons.

The school has closely monitored the teaching in the school and has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within all subject areas. It now plans to extend the good practice in teaching and focus on the effectiveness of students' learning and understanding. The use of assessment data by all staff to ensure that students are suitably challenged is not sufficiently rigorous or consistent.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum for students 11 to 16 is good. Overall the curriculum for students in the sixth form is only satisfactory because the school does not meet statutory requirements for religious education. In the main school, the LSU and in the sixth form the curriculum is carefully matched to the needs of the students. The provision is considerably enhanced by the effective use of opportunities available through the local consortium of schools, colleges and a work-based provider. This ensures that the needs and aspirations of all students can be fully met. There is a well organised 14 to 19 programme which provides opportunities for students to choose a range of optional vocational subjects and gain nationally recognised qualifications. Students entering post-16 education are given very good guidance and support in order to gain entry

to courses which the school cannot provide. However, the school does not meet its statutory obligations to provide religious education for students in the sixth form. All students participate in a wide range of community-based activities. In addition, all Year 10 and Year 12 students undertake a two week work placement. There is a good range of out-of-hours learning activities which are generally well supported by students in the main school. These might be better developed in the sixth form.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Health and safety are promoted well. A health and safety officer has recently been appointed and a committee of key personnel now meets regularly. An on-site health clinic encourages good practice. Child protection procedures are well established and regularly reviewed. Risk assessments are thorough and recruitment procedures take full account of the need to maintain students' safety. Links with outside agencies are very good and the multi-agency approach to support individuals is a strength of the school's work. Teaching assistants are increasingly well used in a variety of roles although in the classroom their role is not sufficiently clearly defined. The wide range of internal and external support provided includes counselling, mediation and mentoring. Pastoral staff are very effective in supporting individuals giving freely of their time and attention. The learning support unit (LSU) is very effective in engaging the most vulnerable in their education. The school provides detailed programmes for students in Years 6, 9 and 11 to provide key information and boost confidence at times of change. Careers advice is very well integrated into the overall provision except in Year 7. A wide range of intervention strategies to support academic achievement has been developed to support students throughout the school. The systems to support individual action planning are good, although the monitoring of academic progress does not provide students with a consistent and clear message on how to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head teacher provides good leadership, demonstrating a clear plan for the direction and development of the school within the community. Re-organisation of the senior leadership team is clarifying their roles so that they can contribute more effectively to the strategic development of the school. Through the use of questionnaires and more informal feedback the school involves parents and other stakeholders in its self evaluation. The school's evaluation correctly identifies the weaknesses in the school, especially in respect of the quality of teaching and learning. The school has responded effectively to almost all issues identified in the previous report. Leadership has identified some energetic and capable middle managers, and through the development of a faculty structure these staff can assume a more pro-active developmental and monitoring role for their departments.

There are still some areas where inconsistencies exist in implementing school policy within all levels of management, including the governing body. The majority of targets related to the school's specialist status have been met and the school recognises that it needs to build further links with partnership organisations. Specialist status has also enabled ICT resources to be significantly increased throughout the school. Governors are supportive of the school and they understand the problems the school still faces, for example the difficulties in recruiting staff to some subject areas. They are beginning to provide appropriate challenge and contribute to improvement planning. Finances are managed carefully in order to give satisfactory value for money. The pace of change and direction identified since the appointment of the current head teacher clearly indicates that the school has the capacity to improve further.



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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

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

<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	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<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**

Students

I am writing to inform you of the results of the inspection of your school on 2 and 3 of May 2006. Your comments, and the discussions with you, provided very useful information about your school and the esteem within which you hold it.

You told us that your school provided a sound education and that it had considerably improved since the appointment of the headteacher. We fully agree with this view and we were very satisfied that the school managers have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has many strengths, particularly the work done by the LSU in helping and supporting those who have learning difficulties. You identified that the systems to guide and support you, particularly at transition times in Years 6, 9 and 12, were very effective and we agree with you. The school provides a safe and secure learning environment and there has been a considerable improvement in recent external examination results.

There are four issues which we want the school to address in order to further improve the quality of its provision. The variations in the provision across subjects need to be eliminated by the school's managers by using monitoring more effectively to ensure consistency in implementing agreed whole school policies. Staff must improve the use they make of assessment data to ensure that all students are suitably challenged and make better progress. During our discussions you commented that teachers often missed opportunities to develop your spiritual awareness in lessons, in assemblies and in other activities. Our final issue is that the school should make changes to the timetable in the sixth form to ensure that it fully complies with statutory regulations for religious education. Thank you again for the way in which you helped us during the inspection.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Charlton

Lead Inspector