



Stratford-upon-Avon Grammar School for Girls A Specialist Language College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125730
LEA Warwickshire
Inspection number 281987
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006
Reporting inspector Philippa Francis HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Shottery Manor
School category	Community		Stratford-upon-Avon
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Warwickshire CV37 9HA
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01789 293759
Number on roll	574	Fax number	01789 261450
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Jeff Downes
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Ms Kate Barnett

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Stratford-upon-Avon Grammar School for Girls is a small school and holds specialist language college status. The school has a large sixth form relative to its size, with 357 pupils in the main school and 215 students in the sixth form. The school takes additional students into the sixth form from a wide range of other schools. In 2005 these students accounted for over a quarter of the Year 13 group. Very few of the school's pupils are eligible for free schools meals and smaller-than-average numbers are from minority ethnic groups. A very small percentage of pupils have special educational needs. The school shares some outdoor sports facilities with a neighbouring high school and is within walking distance of a large further education college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with an outstanding sixth form. This judgement matches the school's view overall, but is in contrast to the school's evaluation of good for its sixth form. Pupils are very happy and work very productively. Attendance and behaviour are outstanding. The school provides good value for money and makes very effective use of its resources. This is despite shortcomings of insufficient sixth form study space, the absence of indoor sports facilities and a number of cramped and poor quality classrooms. Pupils at all key stages achieve excellent results and their progress in relation to their prior attainment is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Their personal development is outstanding and the school provides a very high level of care, guidance and support.

The curriculum in the school meets pupils' needs in almost all respects and it is especially effective in the sixth form. Extra-curricular activities are extensive and participation rates are high. Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) and aspects of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship need further development. The new headteacher is rapidly bringing about a number of improvements to the school, such as revising the lesson observation scheme, with an increasingly positive effect. With her skilful leadership and a strong senior and middle management structure now in place, the school demonstrates good capacity to improve further. Specialist language college status has had a highly positive effect across the school and in its collaboration with other partners such as other schools and community organisations.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Inspectors judged sixth form provision to be outstanding, in contrast to the school's view that it is good. Students gain excellent results and almost all complete their courses. All students make at least good progress and those who join the school for the sixth form, numbering over a third of the total, make exceptionally good progress. Students are very successful in gaining places at their first choice universities. Teaching is good with some very effective features, including particularly good development of students' independent learning skills. Students develop outstanding personal skills and the school provides a very high standard of individual care. Leadership and management are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Fully implement plans for checking the quality of teaching and learning across the school so that good practice is identified and shared.
- Improve general classroom accommodation, indoor sports facilities and study space for the growing sixth form, in line with agreed plans.
- Monitor and further develop provision for PSHE and citizenship to ensure consistency of coverage and quality of learning.
- Further develop

ICT by improving resources and increasing staff confidence and expertise in order to broaden and strengthen its use across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Standards reached by pupils across the school are exceptionally high. Results are all considerably higher than national averages and have been consistently so for a number of years. The school sets challenging targets and many pupils meet these. At the end of Key Stage 4, a significant number attain at least eight A* or A grades at GCSE level. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is also very good and many pupils gain close to maximum points in core subjects. Pass rates at GCE A level examinations are very high, including the proportion of students who gain grades A or B. Specialist college status has had a very positive impact on results in languages.

Pupils enter the school with well above average prior attainment. They make good progress, demonstrated by their excellent results and the rate at which they learn in lessons. The group of pupils who completed Key Stage 4 in 2005 contained a small number of pupils who under-performed. However, this was largely as a result of personal circumstances and the school worked very hard to ensure these pupils gained some successes. The very small number of pupils with identified additional learning needs make exceptionally good progress because of the high level of support provided by the school. Students in the sixth form make either good or very good progress in nearly all subjects. Students new to the school in Year 12 often achieve several grades higher than their predicted grade in individual subjects and, overall, this group makes exceptionally good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school makes outstanding provision for pupils' personal development and well-being. It is a stable and happy community in which pupils feel safe and establish good and supportive relationships with one another and with their teachers. They make excellent use of the opportunities the school provides for them to take part in a wide range of activities, sporting, cultural, social and academic. They are keenly aware of their responsibilities to others, within and outside the school; they raise money for charities and many are involved in community events and partnerships. Specialist status has provided new links with schools and pupils abroad, including opportunities for work experience in other countries. In school, senior students work very effectively with younger pupils, directing plays, peer mentoring and giving a lead in a variety of activities. The school council, observed during the inspection, exemplifies the strong sense of pupils' unity and pride in their school. Representatives from all classes contributed to a serious but lively discussion and were obviously confident that the school would listen to their suggestions. Although the school is committed to encouraging healthy lifestyles, implementation of these policies is not yet complete.

Vending machines still offer some sweets and crisps, alongside healthier options, and too many breakfast snacks in the canteen are sugary. Food at lunchtime provides healthier choices and the school is also planning to provide additional water fountains.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The majority of lessons are very effective and many have outstanding features. Teachers are experienced and inspire and motivate pupils to study their subjects thoroughly. They actively encourage the development of independent learning so that pupils very quickly become able to work on their own or collaboratively to good effect. A smaller proportion of lessons are outstanding. Where lessons are good rather than outstanding, this is partly the result of teachers not always making effective use of all opportunities to fully stretch the most able pupils. A few lessons are satisfactory. Characteristics of these lessons include too much emphasis on teacher-led exercises and slightly lower expectations of pupils.

Senior managers assess the quality of lessons well and have accurately identified areas for improvement. They recognise that the use of the results of assessment to inform teaching and learning approaches is an area that needs development, and inspectors agree. Assessment is good and homework is used very well to promote high achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school provides a good curriculum for pupils in the main school and the curriculum in the sixth form is outstanding. All statutory requirements are met, and the improvements required in the last inspection have been made. In Key Stage 4, GCSE options enable pupils to follow a range of interests and achieve breadth and balance in their programme. Here, as in the sixth form, the school is responsive to pupils' needs and preferences. The curriculum is kept under constant review and there have been imaginative extensions to the range of subjects, including the addition of Japanese to the range of languages now taught.

Areas for improvement include the further development and monitoring of the programmes for health education and citizenship, because content and delivery are not yet of consistent quality. The use of ICT also requires further development, to improve staff expertise and confidence and to strengthen its use across the curriculum. Although there is excellent work in physical education, the lack of a dedicated gym and frequent use of the main hall for other activities limit indoor physical education opportunities. The outstanding range of extra-curricular activities is a real strength of the school, contributing splendidly to its ethos and to the pupils' personal development. In these activities, pupils make new discoveries, learn to work in teams,

and involve themselves in work and play, which prepares them well for their life ahead as students and adults.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's view that care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils flourish and quickly gain confidence in a secure learning environment. Staff have very good knowledge of individual pupils and their needs. As a result, individuals receive high quality guidance, including support for academic under-performance and support for those who are vulnerable and at risk. The strength of the school's provision is due in part to its range and variety. Support may come directly from subject staff or form tutors, or it will be coordinated by the appropriate manager if needed. It may also come from other pupils acting in mentoring roles, or from other adults, including a school nurse and youth counsellor. Form tutors play a key role, with all pupils having twice-yearly review sessions with them. In a pilot initiative, this has been extended to include parents in some year groups. There is very good use of outside agencies, for example, to support vulnerable groups. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place and regularly reviewed.

Advice on courses and careers is extremely comprehensive and outside agencies are used very well as sources of information.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and, in the few areas where these are needed, improvements are rapidly taking place. Pupils achieve well and meet, and often exceed, expectations both academically and in their personal development. The new head and the senior leadership team have a clear vision for the future and communicate this well to staff and pupils. They provide good strategic direction. Specialist language college status is a notable improvement since the last inspection, with its significant impact on achievement, resources and the range of opportunities on offer. Governors are well informed about the school and very effective both in terms of scrutiny and support. They connect very effectively with the school, including through very regular contact between the chair and headteacher, and individual governors linked to curriculum areas.

Management in the school is good. There are strong links between senior and middle managers, with regular secondments from middle to senior management.

Responsibilities have been re-shaped to address needs, including the appointment of a business manager at senior leadership level and a focus on teaching, learning and achievement at middle management level. Effective review procedures and comprehensive gathering of feedback inform annual whole-school and departmental planning. However, there is currently no longer-term plan and this has been recognised as an area for development. Resources are very well managed. However, accommodation

problems remain, notably shortcomings of cramped classroom accommodation, too little study space for sixth formers, and a lack of indoor sports' facilities.

Issues from the last inspection have been fully addressed, notably specialist accommodation for music and design technology and the meeting of some statutory curriculum requirements. The monitoring of teaching and learning and the use of data to track progress are issues from the last inspection that the school has been working on and which it judges to be still in need of further improvement. A common approach to monitoring is now in place, supported by staff training. The school recognises the need to be more consistent in its use of assessment data and is reviewing its practice.

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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	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	1	

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	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
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	1	
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

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your politeness, co-operation and assistance during our visit. We enjoyed meeting you and found your comments and opinions very perceptive and helpful to our work. The majority of you gain excellent results and work very hard. You develop outstanding personal skills. These are shown through your very good communication and social skills and your ability to express well thought out opinions. Your behaviour is impeccable and your attendance is very good. You make good progress in your lessons and, in the sixth form, many of you progress exceptionally well. Your school provides very high levels of care, guidance and support and is actively working on promoting healthy and safe lifestyles, including by cutting down on sugary snacks available at break times and improving security around the Shottery Field's entrance. Many of your teachers inspire you and they make sure you succeed. With very effective leadership from your headteacher, the school has a very strong focus on ensuring that you all make the best possible progress. You must support this by continuing to strive to produce the best possible work you can. We also judge that your lessons need to make a wider use of ICT across the school to strengthen this aspect of the curriculum. We noted your concerns about several aspects of the school's resources that need improvement and we agree with you. We judge that classroom accommodation, indoor sports facilities and study space for sixth form students are the neediest areas and that the school's plans to improve these areas should be rapidly put in place.

We especially noted the successes you all have in a wide range of activities, including national competitions, fund-raising and community work. We congratulate you on this work, which reflects very well on you as individuals as well as on the reputation of the school.