



The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101941
LEA Ealing LEA
Inspection number 285581
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006
Reporting inspector Meena Wood

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Queen's Drive
School category	Foundation		Acton
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		London W3 0HW
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	02087521525
Number on roll	1411	Fax number	02089936632
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Alison Mountford
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2001	Headteacher	Ms Chris Sydenham

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 8 March 2006 - 9 March 2006	Inspection number 285581
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls is an 11-18 foundation school in Ealing with science specialist status. In 2005 there were 1411 pupils aged 11-19, of these 363 pupils were in the sixth form. A very high number of pupils, double the national average, are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including the number with statements of special educational needs, is below the national average. Two thirds of pupils' first language is other than, or believed to be other than, English. Some 84% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Of these, the largest minority ethnic group in the school, over one fifth of pupils, are mostly of Arabic Middle Eastern heritage. Indian, Pakistani and White groups are the next largest, followed by pupils of Black Caribbean and African background. Languages spoken by pupils, apart from English, are mainly Arabic, Urdu and Portuguese. Attendance is at the national average as is authorised absence.

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 which provides satisfactory value for money. It provides a caring community and prides itself on encouraging high academic expectations amongst its pupils. Pupils enjoy being at school and contribute positively to school life. Behaviour is good. Attendance is satisfactory. A healthy lifestyle is encouraged through sport and healthy eating options.

Pupils from a range of different backgrounds are taught well, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is good because teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and pupils are very well motivated and want to succeed in their studies. Overall, pupils achieve well and make good progress. The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are satisfactory and are good for pupils in the sixth form. Specialist college status, which the school gained in July 2002, has been used very well to improve curriculum provision.

Work is not always matched sufficiently to the needs of more able pupils and those with specific language needs. The work of many pupils is not consistently marked so as to inform them how they can improve.

Self-evaluation is mostly accurate but is insufficiently self critical in relation to the quality of the learning environment in some parts of the school, which inspectors found to be unsatisfactory, along with the effectiveness of pupils' language and literacy support. The new Headteacher and the new Chair of Governors recognise the challenges faced by the school to further improve pupils' progress and standards in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. They are strongly committed to an ethos of meeting pupils' academic aspirations. Inspectors broadly agreed with their overall judgements of the school. Since the last inspection the school has made notable improvements and its capacity to improve is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision for post-16 pupils is good. Retention on AS, A level and AVCE courses is high. Given the average GCSE grades of pupils on entry to these courses, they make good progress in their studies. In 2005 most pupils passed their GCE A/AS and AVCE examinations. However, numbers of pupils passing two or more examinations or gaining high grades for the last three years are below the national average.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory as teachers are not helping less able pupils in Year 12 sufficiently to develop their independent learning and critical thinking skills, so that they can make a satisfactory transition from GCSE to GCE and VCE courses. Guidance and support for pupils are good. Pupils greatly value the high levels of personal and academic support they receive from teachers as part of a one-to-one review process. The leadership of the sixth form has been proactive in changing the curriculum of the sixth form in response to the interests of the pupils. In the last three years, the school has attracted larger numbers to stay on in the sixth form through offering more appropriate courses, including GNVQ Intermediate level.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the planning of teaching in years 10 and 11 and 12 and provide more appropriate tasks and activities for all pupils, especially those who require greater challenge and lower attaining pupils
- Assess and mark pupils' work so that they have clear guidance on where to improve
- Provide higher quality support for pupils with EAL and those with literacy needs
- Improve the learning environment in the school and the classrooms so as to enhance the quality of learning for all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. When pupils enter the school, their standards are broadly average and, by the age of 16, their standards in GCSE examinations are above average. In 2005 the proportion of pupils attaining 5 grades of A*-C including GNVQ vocational qualifications was high. Pupils' GCSE results were particularly good in business studies, communication studies, combined science award, home economics, sociology, French, music and in vocational studies.

In Years 7 to 9, achievement is particularly good as most groups of pupils make significant progress. A very large majority of pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, but fewer do as well in science. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. In mathematics, pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 is well below the national average. However results in mathematics GCSE show well above average passes at grades A*-C but slightly below average numbers of pupils passing with A* or A grades.

The overall rate of progress for pupils between Years 7 -11, and pupils' progress in English, is well above the national average and is good. Pupils with free schools meals entitlement, those with special educational needs without statements, and most pupils whose first language is other than, or believed to be other than English make good progress. Higher attaining pupils and Black Caribbean pupils overall make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because of well coordinated personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes. Pupils develop respect and greater understanding of different faiths and cultures during assemblies and in form times, where they discuss a 'thought for the week'. Pupils enjoy being in school, are polite and generally well behaved. In lessons, Year 7 pupils behave particularly well. However, in some instances, in Years 8-11, disruptions to lessons through calling out and talking over the teacher and not always dealt with firmly enough by the teachers. Attendance is satisfactory and has increased gradually over the last four years. Pupils develop a

sense of responsibility through school consultations on, for instance, changes to the PSHE programme and make positive contributions to their school community. Many are successful in the role of peer listeners and some use their heritage languages well in lessons to support classmates with English language needs. Pupils feel safe in school and value the personal support from staff and pupils. Most understand the importance of leading a healthy life-style and particularly appreciate the quality of the school lunches.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school accurately judges the quality of teaching and learning to be good overall for Years 7 to 11. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Pupils are highly motivated to succeed. In Years 7 to 9, teachers sustain pupils' interest with activities that are appropriately challenging. In some lessons, pupils use the interactive whiteboards to present their work. In an AS physics lesson Year 12 pupils produced a clear and succinct guide on electricity and Ohm's Law. Pupils enjoy their learning and develop maturity of thought. In a history lesson on women's voting rights, pupils participated enthusiastically and reasoned well in a debate on civil rights. In a sociology lesson Year 10 pupils identified effective examples of the practical use of equal opportunities legislation in employment. Teachers offer pupils good learning opportunities in lessons to explore their cultures and backgrounds. In history, pupils study a module on the British Raj in India, and in mathematics and science they explore the contribution women have made in these subjects.

Smaller groupings in English, mathematics and science have been successful in meeting the needs of most pupils. But in Years 10, 11 and 12, teachers do not always plan tasks that meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and those with specific language and literacy needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and the school takes care to ensure that it is developed in a way that matches pupils' needs and interests. As a result, pupils and sixth form students say that they feel that the school cares about them. Information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education (RE) are now timetabled in Years 10 and 11. There is good take up by pupils of GCSE examinations in heritage languages. The good selection of activities, that take place at lunch-times and after school, extends pupils' interests and strengthens their relationships. Indoor sporting activities are limited owing to the lack of adequate facilities but outdoor activities, such as netball, are available.

The school's specialist status has enabled it to improve its provision not only in mathematics and science, but also in other subjects. In response to its local primary schools, the school runs Year 5 and 6 taster and master classes in technology, modern foreign languages, science and mathematics.

To encourage Year 10 and 11 pupils to become aware of the needs of the workplace, the school has recently introduced an appropriate examined PSHE course, Preparation for Working Life Enterprise and financial skills are developed well through PSHE, Maths and ICT. Aspects of citizenship are being developed through the National Curriculum and are taught through history and geography in Years 7 to 9.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory. Teachers and other members of staff are good at ensuring the safety and welfare of pupils. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory with frequent premises checks and good regard for safety in lessons. Risk assessments for whole-school activities are in place, together with control measures for significant hazards on the school site. Risk assessments in individual subjects have not yet been fully completed in line with recommended health and safety advice. Child protection arrangements are satisfactory. All pupils in Years 9 and 11 receive effective guidance on 'next steps' and an Options Evening, with clear information, is held for pupils and their parents.

Form tutors, divisional heads and specialist support, such as learning mentors and school counsellors, provide pupils with good pastoral support. Specialist counselling is available for vulnerable pupils. Pupils are encouraged in their learning by the much-valued Praise Postcards and teachers are beginning to set pupils individual targets to guide their learning and progress. However, teachers' assessment of pupils' work does not consistently inform them how they can improve. Support in and out of lessons for pupils with specific language and literacy needs is not consistently available and not always of sufficiently high quality. In Years 10 to 11, and in Year 12 GNVQ courses, these pupils make little progress in some lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management in the school are good. The headteacher has been in post since September 2004 and provides good leadership. She is well supported by able senior and middle managers. Staff morale and motivation are high and all are committed to meeting the academic aspirations of pupils.

Self-evaluation has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Leaders have a generally good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is very well informed by regular monitoring of teaching, review of the work of departments, feedback from pupils, external partners, parents and carers. However, the support of

pupils with specific language and literacy problems, or with learning difficulties and disabilities, has not been evaluated for its effectiveness and impact on raising standards. A key issue raised in the last inspection, of poor accommodation, has partly been addressed through the building of a purpose built sixth form, new music rooms, extension to dining room and an additional ICT room. Some weaknesses in accommodation such as the small size of the main dining hall and the poor decorative state of many classrooms are not easily addressed, owing to the prioritisation of saved funds for future sports and performing arts facilities. The quality of the learning environment in parts of the school is however, unsatisfactory. In some areas, there is a lack of cleanliness with graffiti on furniture and walls.

The priorities and actions in the school improvement plan are appropriate for steering improvements. For instance, the school has been proactive this year in raising achievement for pupils in Years 10 and 11 through well thought out intervention strategies and it is addressing the raising of standards for sixth form pupils through effective target setting in tutorials. Some medium and longer term priorities are included, but this aspect of the plan is under-developed.

Good professional development arrangements support the implementation of school priorities. There are sound arrangements for performance management and for the induction of new staff.

The governing body is actively involved in the school and ensures effective compliance with statutory requirements.

The cost of education per pupil is much higher than the national average, and the school has demonstrated the effectiveness of these additional resources in raising achievement and standards for most groups of pupils. Overall value for money provided by the school is satisfactory.

The school has good capacity to improve.

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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	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	
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	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

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

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	3	
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

Pupils

Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work and your life in school. I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school.

* We believe your school is a good school. * The headteacher and the other people in the school with responsibility, make decisions with your best interests at heart. Through the school council and when you are asked for your views, you make good suggestions and play your part in improving the school.* Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and help you to learn. You are very well motivated and enjoy your learning. Many of you produce good standards of work in the lessons. Teachers do not always give you clear guidance on where to improve in your work.* Your behaviour is generally good but in lessons you could improve the quality of your learning by responding to teachers' questions through putting up your hand and not calling out. * Between years 7-11, but especially between years 7-9, you make good progress and gain good results in your examinations. You do particularly well in GCSE business studies, communication studies, combined science award, home economics, sociology, French and in vocational studies. * In years 10, 11 and 12 some of you who are more able in your studies do not make as much progress as you should; those of you who need more support with English language and writing skills also do not make as much progress as you should.* You value the personal support that is available from teachers and mentors and some of you use your languages effectively in lessons to support friends newly arrived in this country, needing help with explanations. Many of you act successfully as peer listeners. * You have good opportunities to participate in interesting activities during lunch times and after school.* Some of your classrooms and parts of the school are not clean with graffiti on furniture and walls. You can take a greater pride in keeping your school clean. You can suggest to your teachers how best to make your rooms more attractive through displays of your work for instance.

Your school needs to * provide more appropriate tasks and activities in lessons for all of you, so that you can make greater progress and do even better in examinations, especially in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form * provide higher quality support for those of you with English language and literacy needs* assess and mark your work with clear guidance on where to improve* work with you to make your school a clean and inspiring learning environment.

I wish you success in your future.

Meena Wood HMI

Lead Inspector