



Newstead Wood School for Girls

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101671
Local Authority Bromley
Inspection number 286145
Inspection dates 21–22 February 2007
Reporting inspector Ian Hartland HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Avebury Road
School category	Foundation		Orpington
Age range of pupils	11–18		BR6 9SA
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01689 853626
Number on roll (school)	988	Fax number	01689 853315
Number on roll (6th form)	296		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr L Cabot
		Headteacher	Mrs E Allen
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	21–22 February 2007	286145

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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

Newstead Wood is an average-sized, highly selective girls' school. The attainment of students when they join the school is very high. The school receives girls from a wide geographical area and a large number of primary and independent schools. A third of the students come from minority ethnic groups. Very few students are eligible for free school meals or have learning difficulties or disabilities. An average number of students speak English as an additional language, but are not at an early stage of language acquisition. The school gained the status of a specialist engineering college in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Newstead Wood is an outstanding school because of the single-minded and quiet resolve of the school leaders and staff to ensure that each student is given every opportunity, encouragement and support to do as well as she can. As a consequence, students right across the school reach exceedingly high standards in tests and examinations and make excellent progress.

The students learn in an environment which encourages them to grasp every opportunity with both hands. They are empowered to believe in themselves and become willing to embrace challenges. They are very highly motivated with nothing short of a ferocious appetite for learning and a genuine hunger for success. Their strong sense of self and their outstanding achievements are a direct consequence of the crystal-clear vision of the headteacher who has steadily, over the last six years, moved the school forward from being a more traditional, selective school into a learning institution where the students are trusted with considerable control over their learning. As a result, they not only achieve excellent academic success but also gain in many other ways and become mature, thoughtful, highly articulate and confident young women who are aware that they possess the potential to be the leaders of tomorrow. The strongly inclusive ethos results in a community which is orderly and caring and very effectively promotes the development of the whole person, including the spiritual, moral, social and emotional as well as intellectual and academic.

The teaching is good and students learn at a fast rate. The high quality of teaching is not yet consistent across the school because some teachers are not making full use of the information on the students' progress in their planning to successfully meet the needs of all their students. The curriculum is excellent with a very wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. The care and guidance given is excellent.

The school has a very good reputation, especially for educating gifted and talented students and is widely known to be successful. This accolade does not result in the school becoming self-satisfied. The school does not rest content with past achievements. There is an abiding and firm resolution to continue to improve which can be seen in the consistently high expectations of the teachers and senior managers and the considerable commitment of all the staff to the students. The drive for improvement is seen in a curriculum which is continually developing to meet student needs and the very precise tracking of each student's progress which results in speedy intervention when any begin to fall short of what they are capable of achieving.

The school has used its specialist engineering status to enhance the provision not only for design and technology, mathematics and science but also more widely in other subjects such as modern foreign languages and music. The innovative sessions on construction using instructions in a foreign language are typical of the creative use of the extra resources provided. All subjects are able to bid for funds for developing skills associated with engineering such as thinking skills, working in teams and problem solving.

Since its last inspection five years ago the school has sustained the high quality of education it offers its students. The headteacher, supported by the senior leadership team and governors, provides outstanding leadership. Currently, some team leaders are not sufficiently rigorous in monitoring the quality of teaching. The school is aware of its strengths and of those areas in need of development and has a good capacity to improve. The school spends wisely and provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form provides a traditional academic curriculum which is well matched to the needs of students. The school consulted its sixth form on its provision and subsequently introduced new courses in response. There is a good programme for personal, social and health education which includes talks from a wide range of external speakers. Teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. Standards are very high in all the subjects offered and achievement is very good.

All the students who start their studies complete them successfully and they receive very good support if they encounter difficulties. They appreciate the efforts made by the school to help them secure places at university. Students are keen to take up the exceptional number of opportunities to develop their leadership potential, such as visiting local primaries to mentor gifted and talented pupils. The sixth form is well led but the systems for monitoring the quality of lessons are not used consistently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rigour in the monitoring of teaching to ensure it is of a consistently high standard
- Ensure information on student progress and attainment is used more effectively to plan teaching which meet the needs of all students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Girls start in Year 7 with standards that are well above average and they continue to attain very highly throughout their time at the school. The fact of their high ability, coupled with a willingness to work consistently hard and to respond to the good teaching they receive, are significant factors in enabling them to make excellent progress.

By the end of Year 9 they do extremely well in national tests reaching exceptionally high standards. Very high proportions reach the higher levels. By the end of Year 11 all students regularly gain at least 5 higher grades, A*–C at GCSE, with many obtaining the very highest grades. There is little variation between subjects. The majority of students also gain the highest grades at A level. Students with particular learning needs make very good progress. The school regularly meets its own challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The students' personal development is outstanding. When asked what they liked about the school, students were enthusiastic about many aspects and could think of very little they would change. One said, 'Newstead helps you become what you ought to be'. Attendance levels are very good and reflect the students' desire to learn.

Behaviour is excellent. The students have a mature and meticulous approach to learning. They are confident, lively, courteous and friendly to adults and to one another. They say that bullying is 'absolutely not a problem' and that they can always find someone to help with any difficulties. The students are proud of their school and have a strong sense of community. Parents give good support to their children's learning. The students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is excellent. They are encouraged to think of others and the school raises substantial sums for charity. There are many opportunities for students to think about ideas, actions and their consequences.

The students' social development is outstanding, through the house system, the peer listening, buddy schemes and school councils. There is a high degree of racial harmony. Students are tolerant and compassionate because teachers set them good examples. Music and art feature strongly in the life of the school and students have good opportunities to learn about other cultures.

Students gladly take on responsibilities and work well with others, with sixth form students very supportive of younger ones in a very wide variety of ways. Many students gain confidence and new skills through involvement in the outstanding extra-curricular activities, many of which are run by the students themselves. The development of healthy lifestyles is good and the school prepares students extremely well for later life. Community links are outstanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The good quality of teaching allied to the students' high ability and their excellent attitudes to learning ensure that their achievement is outstanding. In nearly all lessons teachers have very secure grasp of their subject. This enables them to ask searching questions which challenge students, maintain a good pace to learning and to prompt higher levels of understanding. This is particularly effective with the highest-attaining students. Most lessons are well planned although there is some variation in the quality of planning across the school. There are good systems to identify and support with regular mentoring and extra workshops for those students whose progress may be a cause for concern. Teachers give readily of their time and effort in this respect and

employ well-ordered systems to record and check on student progress. The school's recent focus on 'Deep Learning' is beginning to have a positive impact and is well received by students.

In some cases the challenging pace of the lesson leaves some weaker students behind which leads them to disengage and become passive observers. Weaker planning does not identify clearly enough the provision for slower students and sometimes results in summaries of the learning at the end of the lesson being rushed or omitted completely.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum provides breadth, balance, enrichment and challenge. The quality of the provision is outstanding. Students speak with great enthusiasm about the numerous activities that are organised outside of lessons and many claim that these are the aspect of school life that they like the best. A regular review takes place to bring forth imaginative ideas about how the curriculum can change to meet the students' needs.

The school leaders hold very strong views about how learning should be organised and there is very little grouping by ability. This policy inevitably requires teachers to plan lessons with greater precision to ensure they provide appropriate learning activities that meets the needs of a range of abilities. There is very good provision for students with particular learning needs and outstanding opportunities for those on the gifted and talented register. The school is involved with various national agencies and institutions of higher education in research into ways of learning for the most able which is having a positive impact on teaching and learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support for the students are excellent. Parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for. The school has very good provision for pupils with specific medical or personal needs. Risk assessments and health and safety procedures are effective and consistently applied. Child protection procedures are clear and widely understood so that pupils feel safe and secure.

The excellent pastoral system gives outstanding support to pupils. Its many strands such as the tutorial and house systems are all carefully organised and monitored. All pupils including those with English as a second language are very well supported. Attendance is rigorously monitored. The well-constructed systems for tracking each student's progress result in them knowing how well they are performing and what they should do to improve. A minority of teachers are not using information on the students' progress and attainment well enough to plan their teaching to successfully meet the needs of all the students in their classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher has a clear vision for developing the leadership potential of both staff and students. Under her excellent leadership the school has maintained its high academic standards and taken measured risks in developing this leadership potential. Senior staff, middle managers and senior students are entrusted with delegated responsibilities and dispersed leadership. The headteacher regularly monitors the overall progress of students with middle leaders and action is taken to address concerns.

Subject leaders are still developing their leadership skills. The school has piloted coaching sessions to support middle leaders, which is being made available for all. The heads of subjects know some of the strengths and areas for development in their areas and are successfully implementing development plans. However, some middle leaders are more successful than others at accurately assessing the quality of teaching and checking on the progress staff make in improving their teaching. The judgements made by some leaders about the quality of teaching were more generous than those of the inspectors. Governors support the school well and work in partnership with the school's leaders.

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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	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?	1	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 to below 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	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing following the inspectors' recent visit to let you know what we think about your school. Thank you for your help in talking to us so openly about the work you do and what you think about the school. You are right to be so proud of your school for we found it to be outstanding with very many strengths.

As a result of good teaching and your hard work and determination to do well, you reach extremely high standards in tests and examinations. You are making excellent progress and achieve exceptionally well indeed. You make the most of the very many opportunities and extra activities the school offers. Your behaviour is excellent, you get on so well together and you show outstandingly positive attitudes.

We found that relationships between staff and students are very good indeed. The staff guide and support you well. You are outstandingly well cared for and feel safe at school. The vast majority of your parents are very happy with the school and all it provides.

We think that your headteacher provides outstanding leadership and, along with other school leaders, has a clear sense of direction and knows the ways to make the school an even better place in which to learn and thrive. We have asked your school's leaders to ensure that some things are even better. We have asked them to make sure that staff with responsibilities are better at checking the quality of teaching and at making it even better so that all teachers can become as good as the very best. We also want all teachers to use the information they have on your achievements and progress more productively when planning their teaching, so it meets the learning needs of all of you very well.

With every good wish.

Ian Hartland Her Majesty's Inspector