



Waldegrave School for Girls

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102928
Local Authority Richmond Upon Thames
Inspection number 286533
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Paul Armitage HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Fifth Cross Road
School category	Community		Twickenham
Age range of pupils	11–16		TW2 5LH
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	020 8894 3244
Number on roll (school)	1026	Fax number	020 8893 3670
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs J Fellows, JP
		Headteacher	Mrs P Nunn
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	17–18 January 2007	286533

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Waldegrave School is a popular, oversubscribed comprehensive. 72% of students are white British with others coming from a wide range of ethnic groups. 43 different languages are spoken by students. Students' standards when they enter school vary but, overall, they are above average. Some come from homes experiencing considerable hardship. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average although the number with statements of special educational needs is above. The school is specialist in science.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Waldegrave is an outstanding school. Standards are high and almost all students do extremely well academically and in their personal development. There are many reasons for this. High on the list are the attitudes of students. They want to do well and they use the resources in the school very effectively. Students' personal development is excellent. Supported by the many opportunities, most are clearly developing high levels of confidence and understanding. They get on very well together. Behaviour is generally very good. There have been some low-level difficulties which the school is addressing successfully.

Also high on the list is the staff - not only teachers but also support staff. The quality of teaching is impressive and there is a real sense that staff want students to be successful and enjoy school. There is an interesting, flexible curriculum which continues to evolve and a large number of extra-curricular activities which are well used by students.

The quality of leadership and management is very high. The headteacher and other managers motivate and inspire their colleagues and the students. They monitor the school well, know its strengths and weaknesses and respond decisively. The school development plan covers relevant issues and the headteacher has recently prioritised these appropriately. Governors are effective 'critical friends'. Middle managers lead effectively and efficiently.

Another reason why students do well is the support they receive from parents and carers. This is evident from the high number of questionnaires received by inspectors, some with comments. The comments are varied. Some are conflicting, for example, on the amount of homework and the quality of communication between school and home. A small number raise behaviour as an issue and others refer to variability in the quality of teaching. All these views were taken into account during the inspection and used alongside other evidence. However, the overwhelming view is that parents are very content with the school.

The school has made the most of opportunities arising from specialist science status. There have been curriculum improvements that have improved girls' attainment in GCSE. Learning has benefited from improved provision for information and communications technology (ICT). There have been effective initiatives to support personal learning. The school supports another local secondary school and science in local primary schools. It runs an evening class in GCSE astronomy that is open to the community. However, the most influential benefit has been the encouragement it has given to staff and students to take initiatives. Overall, the school has made excellent progress since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

Waldegrave is a high achieving school. It monitors itself well. Its agenda for future development expressed in its school development plan is highly relevant. Accordingly, there is just one point for improvement:

- Implement the 'key issues' identified by the school in its current development plan.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Overall, the standards attained by students are well above average. In national tests at the end of Year 9, students reached very high standards. In the GCSE in 2005 and 2006, around 80% of Year 11 students gained 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C and about 33% gained A* or A grades - very high proportions.

Students also make excellent progress as they move through the school. This judgement applies to all students including those from different ethnic groups and social backgrounds and those with learning difficulties. Students achieve well because of the excellent teaching and support they receive and because of their own very positive attitudes. In addition, the school's very positive learning environment and the backing of parents and carers motivate students to perform to the best of their ability.

Governors and senior managers are very pleased with these results. However, the school is not complacent and so they monitor effectively and work with staff in areas where improvement is required.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development is outstanding. Most students are becoming confident, well-informed and discriminating young people. They are good at evaluating opinions and information, making up their own minds and developing a moral viewpoint. For the most part, they work well together - in class, elsewhere in the school, and in the local community. There is a small incidence of low-level bullying but both parents and students say that this is dealt with quickly and effectively. Students have a very good understanding of the various cultures present in the school - through work in religious education, in assemblies, and in regular interaction between students. The principal festivals of different religions are celebrated. Students from different ethnic groups were interviewed; all were adamant that they had not experienced racism.

Students have a very good understanding of all the elements of a healthy lifestyle. In this, they are well supported by the high quality and good presentation of food in the dining hall.

Students are well-prepared for supporting themselves in future - through their academic work and through work-related activities such as work experience, links with the Connexions service and the presence, in school, of over 40 business mentors recruited from industry and elsewhere who advise Year 11 students. Students' developing role in running and supporting the school council and other activities is helping them understand how large institutions are managed.

Students play a substantial role in the local community, most notably through charity work. Recently, one of the students was Richmond's 'Student Mayor'.

Students very much enjoy learning. With very few exceptions, their attitudes are excellent. The attendance rate is high. There is a small amount of irritating behaviour which distracts both teachers and students and which upsets parents. The school has recognised this and has put in place effective measures for dealing with it. The school is also working hard to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions. There have been no permanent exclusions for four years.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

While there is some small variation in the quality of teaching and learning, overall it is outstanding. Teachers and students get on well together and this helps students understand difficult work. Typical teaching has high expectations based on imaginative, clearly planned and stimulating activities which give students considerable responsibility for their own learning; it provides memorable experiences. Students listen well and respond enthusiastically.

Teachers monitor students' progress very well and marking is constructive and consistent. In a response on the questionnaire, one parent wrote: 'Teachers have very effective forms of assessment that allows them to plan for and develop my daughter's learning'.

Senior managers are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching because of their frequent observation of classes and other work. Good practice is constantly encouraged and shared; teachers are given time to reflect on their own performance. Being a school that is used for teacher training has mutual benefits, developing experienced teachers as well as the beginners they mentor. Effective use by teachers and students of ICT has a very positive impact on students' enjoyment of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is impressive. It meets the needs, aspirations and capabilities of all students very effectively. It is flexible and is constantly reviewed to meet the changing needs of students - for example, by providing vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and developing excellent links with neighbouring colleges and local employers.

Students enjoy a stimulating and challenging extra-curricular programme. High student participation rates characterise after-school clubs, activities and visits. For example, 60 or more Year 7 girls regularly attend their 'tag rugby' club after school and substantial numbers of students take part in high-quality art, music and drama. Foreign travel and activities for particular groups such as the 'gifted and talented' provide excellent opportunities for students to prepare for their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is excellent. As indicated above, the progress that students make in their academic work is carefully monitored so that both teachers and students are able to do what is necessary to ensure improvement. The school's curriculum is also well tuned to the needs of students.

On a more individual level, students with particular needs are well supported. There is a demanding programme for those who are gifted and talented; good programmes for those whose first language is not English; and more vulnerable students are given excellent learning and other support. Students are also helped by the well-planned personal, social and health education programme and the newly established and very popular Student Services office. Students readily support one another; there is an effective peer mentoring system. Students spoke very highly of the help offered with career choices. The Pastoral Strategy Group of staff ensures good links with outside professionals in social services and elsewhere. The school has effective procedures for checking the security status of staff and others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Senior leadership and management are outstanding. The senior team led by the headteacher is challenging this high performing school to improve still further. The new headteacher has rapidly established herself and won the confidence of staff and students by carefully preserving established strengths and making worthwhile changes – for example, monitoring the quality of teaching more precisely and tackling the minor behaviour problems.

Middle management is very good and in many cases outstanding. All staff, not just teachers, are highly motivated by training that involves them in managing improvement. At all levels there is effective self-evaluation and subsequent planning. The headteacher has recently sharpened this by introducing new priorities in the school development plan.

The budget is very well managed and focused on the core business of teaching and learning. Given the high value outcomes, value for money is excellent.

Governors support and challenge the school to an equal and exemplary extent. They evaluate and improve their own performance as well as the school's and take notice of parents' views. They strongly support the school in providing equal opportunities for students.

Students of all ages are involved in leadership and management of the school by projects they run and by formal and informal consultation through the school council, a new section of the school's website run by the council and other ways. Many students, in many ways, take up the prospectus's invitation to 'throw themselves in to the life of the school' and rightly, the school is intending to develop this further.

Immediate action by the previous headteacher put right the few issues raised by the previous inspection and since then the school has developed continuously. Capacity to improve is very strong.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

As you know we inspected your school earlier this week. We met many of you - in meetings, in class and elsewhere. We valued your judgements and took them into account when reaching our conclusions. There were things you liked and things that you thought could be better but, along with your parents and carers in their questionnaires, your clear view was that you are very pleased with your school.

We agree with you. We have given your school our top grade - grade 1 which we call 'outstanding'. We do not give grade 1 very often so that it is a tribute to everyone at Waldegrave, including you, that we have given this grade. We looked at your results, the progress that you make, the quality of the teaching and your learning, the curriculum including the many extra things you can do, the care and guidance you are given and the quality of your school's leadership and management. In all of these, we think Waldegrave does outstandingly well.

Because your school is so good and your headteacher and governors already know what to do to keep it this way, our only 'key issue' for future development is to agree with them that they should do the things they have set out in the school's development plan.

In the full report which you can read on www.ofsted.gov.uk you will see that we say that one of the reasons for its success is your attitude to school. You want to learn and you use the resources at school very well. I congratulate you on this.

Thank you once again for helping us and my very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Armitage
Her Majesty's Inspector