

# Windsor Girls' School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110057
<b>Local Authority</b>	Windsor and Maidenhead
<b>Inspection number</b>	288574
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Emma Ing HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	715
6th form	192
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs D Allen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs G Labrum
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	Imperial Road Windsor SL4 3RT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01753 795155
<b>Fax number</b>	01753 795156

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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

Windsor Girls' School is smaller than many other schools nationally. It is situated in Windsor but many students come from the nearby town of Slough. About one quarter of the girls come from minority ethnic groups but in the sixth form the proportion is higher. Generally the background of the girls is slightly more privileged than average, but this is not true of all students. The school gained specialist business and enterprise status in 2004.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Whilst satisfactory overall, the school is acutely and rightly aware of the need to refocus its emphasis and all aspects of its provision on the progress that students make. Parents, students and staff alike currently express concern that the school has been coasting in this respect. A group of students agreed with the girl who explained, 'I don't think everyone achieves as well as they could do if they were really focussed'. Achievement is satisfactory. Students who have learning difficulties are well supported and make good progress. However, other students are not set sufficiently challenging targets and there are inconsistencies in the way their progress is tracked. Standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 4 are good because attainment on entry to the key stage is above average and in the sixth form, where attainment on entry is average, they are satisfactory.

Under the strong strategic leadership of the new headteacher the school is well placed to make the next steps and focus sharply on improving the rate of progress that students make. Systems and procedures for monitoring the quality of the work of the school are currently inadequate. The headteacher has an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and robust plans for improvement but, whilst some middle leaders lead their subjects well, there are inadequacies in leadership across the school. The key issues raised by the previous inspection report have been addressed and improvements secured. However overall the quality of education offered is not as good as it was in 2003.

The curriculum offered by the school at all levels is satisfactory but there are insufficient vocational options. The business and enterprise specialist status of the school has not made an impact on the learning or personal development of the girls. Teaching is satisfactory and there is little that is inadequate across the school. There are two common weaknesses which prevent teaching and learning from being judged good. Too many teachers dominate the lessons and do not encourage the girls to take an active part in their learning. There is insufficient attention paid to learners' prior learning in order to ensure that the work set is at an appropriate level for every individual. The girls for their part are passive learners. Their behaviour is acceptable but they have not developed important skills and qualities such as leadership, initiative and independence. The school is caring but the headteacher is aware that there are weaknesses in important areas such as the procedures for safeguarding students and completion of risk assessments.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The standards reached by sixth form girls are average and the progress made by the students is satisfactory. However, students do not achieve as well as they should in some subjects. This is largely as a result of difficulties in staffing which have not been managed sufficiently well. Overall the teaching is satisfactory. The curriculum lacks many vocational options which would suit some girls better than the current provision.

Students in the sixth form are poised and more confident than those lower in the school. Some contribute well to the school community, as for example those that make up the charities' team and the wider community such as those that volunteer in a local centre for people with learning disabilities. However there are not enough opportunities for sixth formers to lead the school and support younger learners.

The morale of the sixth form has recently risen and sixth form students speak of an improving provision. They value the care and the guidance that they are given but, as in the school overall, the tracking of their progress is not well enough managed to ensure early intervention and support when necessary. The acting head of sixth form is maintaining the provision well in preparation for new leader in September 2007 but, understandably, not leading in a strategic fashion.

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

- Ensure that all aspects of the work of the school are sharply focussed on improving the progress that students make.
- Implement systems and procedures to ensure the effective monitoring of the work of the school to inform plans for further improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all teachers meet the needs of all students in lessons and through their use of assessment.
- Develop a curriculum that fully meets the needs of sixth form students.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students make satisfactory progress at this school. They attain above average standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations, reflecting their above average attainment at earlier key stages. Those that enter the sixth form, taken as a whole, are of average ability, and their results are broadly in line with national averages reflecting the satisfactory progress they make there. However, there are variations between subjects reflecting the difficulty that some departments have had in maintaining consistent standards when managing staff absence.

The school has not developed effective ways of building on pupils' previous learning in order to set sufficiently challenging targets for students. Parents rightly express concern that higher attaining students are not fully challenged. The progress of these girls is unsatisfactory both in individual lessons and over time. Students with learning difficulties, by contrast, are both challenged and well supported and make good progress whilst at the school.

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

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students are happy at school and their attendance is satisfactory. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The girls told us that they feel well cared for and safe and all are confident that they would know where to turn if difficulties arose. The girls acknowledge that there is some 'bitchiness', particularly in the younger years but they tell us that neither racism nor bullying are present at school. Most girls behave fairly well most of the time but in some lessons there is too much low level disruption and some students lack self discipline. Behaviour is characterised by passivity rather than purposeful independence. Despite

the fact that the school has specialist status in business and enterprise the girls are not well prepared for the world of work.

Girls are aware of the importance of staying safe in many areas of their lives such as when using the internet. They are also aware of the importance of eating healthily and are helped to do so by the meals offered by the dining room. The school is right to be engaged in refurbishing the toilet blocks as their current poor state is causing difficulties for some. Some students participate in sport outside school and they value this and the other clubs on offer. A small but dynamic group of sixth form girls lead the school in raising money for charities. This includes a school in Ghana with which this school is linked.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teachers have good subject knowledge and are generally good at explanation. There are good strategies in place across the school to meet the needs of students with statements of educational need and the teaching assistants that support them do so with considerable expertise. Too many lessons however lack challenge for the higher ability girls and many lack a sense of pace and urgency. Teachers do not properly focus on the learning that is taking place and most have not developed strategies to enable the girls to engage with and take responsibility for their own learning. There is some very good assessment taking place which identifies for students what they need to do to improve their work, but this is not consistent across the school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The traditional curriculum meets the needs of many but not all students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There are too few vocational courses offered. In Key Stage 3 there are good opportunities for students to catch up on their learning of basic skills and many teachers go out of their way to offer additional support to girls preparing for examinations throughout the school. Some departments are beginning to use information and communication technology well to support learning. The girls' experience of personal and social education is very variable and dependent on who teaches them.

Although the girls have enjoyed a business education week the school's specialism of business and enterprise has had very limited impact in improving their rate of progress or developing their skills and understanding in this area. There has been some success in the outreach programme which has involved work with the extended schools cluster. The extra-curricular sporting opportunities are good and there is a sound range of other activities.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

This is a very caring school but weaknesses in the current systems and procedures mean that the impact of the work of the staff is only satisfactory. Parental links are in place and well used with a very high proportion of parents attending academic review day. Girls from minority ethnic groups are integrated and supported well as are vulnerable girls and those with learning difficulties. All girls are given good guidance on courses and other options open to them in the future. Those in Year 11 are very appreciative of the opportunities that they were given to learn about sixth form courses and look forward to the taster days when they will try out different courses and consider how sixth form work will differ from their current experience.

The school has begun to implement procedures to ensure a consistent approach to managing the care and support of students and is aware that not all the policies or procedures are robust enough. Procedures for the safeguarding of students in particular require attention.

Although there is some tracking of students' progress, the data are not used effectively to ensure that the girls make good progress, that appropriate intervention is made swiftly and that teachers are held to account.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The headteacher has an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is ambitious for the school. She has begun to implement robust systems to effect improvement and is giving clear direction to her staff. She is not given sufficient support from her senior team, some of whom lack strategic vision and a clear understanding of leadership. Current roles and responsibilities of the over-large team are not securing development at a fast enough pace.

Some middle leaders lead their subjects well. In the case of modern foreign languages, for example, which is led exceptionally well, liaison with the feeder middle schools ensures good progression in languages. Students are set challenging targets and much work has been expended to ensure that teaching across the department is consistently good. The quality of leadership across the school is however inconsistent. Many departments are insufficiently rigorous in their monitoring and evaluation of their work and of the progress students make to enable them to plan appropriately for improvement. Systems and procedures are being implemented to support this process but have not had time to make a difference.

The governing body is well led. It is effectively structured in order to manage its business and supports the school well. The chair of governors has a good understanding of the situation of the school. But the governing body does not hold the school to account sufficiently closely to improve the academic progress and welfare of students.

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## Annex A

## 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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No

### Achievement and standards

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
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	4	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No	No
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

8 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Windsor Girls' School, Windsor, SL4 3RT

We greatly enjoyed spending time in your school on our recent inspection and gained valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of your school by watching you at work and talking with you. Thank you for sharing your opinions with us. You will see from the report that we have taken them very seriously.

We found your school to be satisfactory. As you told us some of you are coasting a little and not doing as well as you could. But this is not true of all of you; those with learning needs are well supported and make good progress. You were all very positive about the care given to you by the school and we agree that it is a caring school. However there are some areas that need to be sharpened up and in particular the school needs to set challenging targets and monitor your progress towards these much more closely in order to ensure that they can intervene effectively if you are not making good progress.

Some of you told us where to look for good teaching, and you were absolutely right, you do have some very good teachers. However some teachers are not good at getting you involved in your learning and thinking about the work. We have asked your school to improve teaching and their marking of your work so that you always know what you need to do next in order to reach the next level. The courses that you are offered are reasonable, but the school would do well to extend the opportunities that you have to follow vocational courses and we have asked them to look into this.

Many of you expressed optimism for the future of the school. We too believe that the school is well placed to make the next steps. Your headteacher has an excellent understanding of what needs to be done and good leadership skills. We have asked the staff to monitor the effectiveness of their work in order to plan for further improvement. Your role in supporting the school to become better is also very important. I am aware that the school council is developing a strong voice and I would urge you to support this forum and to make sure that your views are heard. Do continue to share with staff what helps you to learn and what courses you want to follow, but also be prepared to do your bit by getting down to work in lessons and taking responsibility for your learning.

With best wishes

Mrs Emma Ing

Her Majesty's Inspector