



Watford Grammar School for Boys

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117573
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290876
Inspection dates 27–28 September 2006
Reporting inspector Rashida Sharif HMI

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

Type of school	Other secondary	School address	Rickmansworth Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Watford
Age range of pupils	11–18		Hertfordshire WD18 7JF
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01923 208900
Number on roll (school)	903	Fax number	01923 208901
Number on roll (6th form)	341		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Alan Huggins
		Headteacher	Mr Martin Post
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	27–28 September 2006	290876

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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

Watford Grammar School for Boys is a larger than average partially selective school, with boys admitted from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds. A significant minority of students are bi-lingual. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals, with learning difficulties and disabilities, and statements of special educational need are low. The school has had specialist Science College status since 2002. Students enter the school with attainment which is well above average but there is a wider range of ability than is the case in many grammar schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Parents praised the work of the school in their responses to the questionnaire. 'I feel my children are extremely happy and are doing very well in their work at Watford Grammar School for Boys and feel totally included in the school as a community' and, 'Staff are very approachable and caring'. This is a highly effective school with outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher's vision has led to a further rise in standards since the previous inspection and students make excellent progress. The newly formed senior management team is also growing in confidence and is having a positive impact on standards. Students' personal development and well-being, the curriculum and sixth form provision are outstanding. Students' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning are also outstanding, as is the commitment of the staff. The school's self-evaluation is accurate in identifying where provision is outstanding and where improvements are needed. For example, the school recognises the need to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation undertaken by subject leaders, particularly in developing students' understanding of how they can do better and improving further the quality of teaching and learning. The school's specialist science status has had a direct and beneficial impact on the school and the curriculum. The school has developed excellent local and national links and has extended even further its effective partnerships with others. Students are confident and behave in an exemplary way in lessons and around the school, thriving on the responsibility given to them. In particular, sixth formers contribute strongly to the lower school through peer mentoring, form prefect and 'buddy' schemes and through the student council. The council has made many constructive suggestions for improvement in healthy eating, study time and the building programme upon which the school has acted. The wide range of opportunities outside the classroom is excellent. Participation in a range of extra curricular opportunities is second to none. Competitive sports are taken very seriously, to the point that sportsmen of international standing can be counted among the students and 'old boys'. More reflective activities, such as music, chess, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and debating, all thrive and help develop rounded and mature students. Rather than detract from their studies, these activities complement and enhance their academic performances. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire feel that their child is safe, well cared for and makes good progress. Students identified the friendly, welcoming and supportive approach of teachers as a major strength of the school, contributing to their high attainment. They felt strongly that relationships in the school were very good and that there was always someone to talk to about problems if they had any. Students are confident that any bullying will be dealt with promptly and effectively. The quality of teaching is good overall, although the very best practice is not effectively shared. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are outstanding and are good in the rest of the school. The curriculum offers a good range of choice with Latin and a second modern foreign language available before Year 9. Students have a wide range of GCSE courses from which to choose, and this flexibility allows them to benefit from more combinations than might usually be found. Sixth formers also benefit from increasingly wide choices. Specialist science status has had a good impact on the breadth of curriculum and levels of participation. The school

rightly prides itself on the outstanding care and support it provides. The headteacher and the newly formed senior management team provide a very clear vision for the development of the school, building on established strengths. They also accurately identify areas for further development. They set high expectations for students' behaviour and achievement which are shared by all staff and governors. The school rightly prides itself on its commitment to success for all its students. The school has improved its systems for monitoring its performance; however evaluating the impact of its work is less developed. Leadership of subject teams is generally good but there remain inconsistencies in approaches to monitoring and evaluation so that best practice is not always shared. Governors are committed to the success of the school and increasingly hold it to account, showing a full understanding of the key areas for improvement. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. This improvement, the use of a recent external review of leadership and management and the continuing rise in standards across the school indicate good capacity to improve further. The school provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are outstanding. The school offers a wide range of academic courses, meeting the aspirations of the vast majority of the school's students and parents. Where students' aspirations are for vocational alternatives, the school has an extensive network of collaborating institutions to ensure appropriate alternative provision is found. In addition, collaboration with the local girls' grammar school extends students' opportunities to follow new courses, such as food technology, sociology, film studies or Latin. Sixth formers are excellent role models for younger students and are keen to take on the many responsibilities offered to support them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of learning and teaching through the sharing of the very best practice in the school. - Develop 'assessment for learning' to ensure that it is coherent and consistent throughout the school and provides students with the feedback and advice they need to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Standards throughout the school, including in the sixth form, are very high and overall student achievement is outstanding. Standards in tests and examinations have risen and have been largely sustained over a considerable period and the school meets its performance targets. The sixth form recently matched its best GCE A level results ever. In keeping with its specialist college status, the school has particularly high levels of achievement in the sciences. Achievement is also high in a number of other subjects,

including modern foreign languages, economics and business, reflecting very strong teaching and learning, especially in the sixth form. Bilingual students make increasingly good progress. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported and make excellent progress as do gifted and talented students through the extensive high quality extra-curricular activities, including those organised through the Science College status.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well being are outstanding overall. They are most polite and welcoming to visitors; their motivation, coupled with consistently excellent behaviour in lessons, contributes to the very good quality of their learning. Students feel safe and secure in the school and say that the very rare incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. They enthusiastically espouse a healthy life style through their energetic participation in an extensive range of sporting, musical and other extra-curricular activities. Attendance rates are very high in comparison with the national average and students confirm they enjoy and value the experience the school offers them. The links with and contribution made to the community are outstanding, for example, a group of students teach computer and communication skills to a group of mothers from the local community as part of the schools 'mums and sons' initiative. Significant efforts have been made to raise funds for charities and improve the local environment. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional overall. Students develop a clear sense of social awareness within a strong moral framework which has been enhanced by the student led house system. There is scope for greater consistency in the attention paid to students' spiritual development. Careers guidance, work experience and enterprise opportunities develop students' work-related skills very well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are outstanding and are good in the rest of the school. The good teaching is generally challenging and conducted with good pace. However, sometimes teachers do not plan in enough detail for the range of abilities and differing rates of students' progress in classes. Guidance about how students can improve their work is not given consistently throughout the school. In the outstanding lessons, teachers' exceptional subject knowledge, probing questioning and clear guidance extends students' confidence and their progress. Teachers generally employ a good range of challenging methods and provide opportunities for students to develop

independent ways of working and creativity in their learning. Excellent classroom relationships and enthusiasm from all make lessons successful. Students speak very highly about the subject expertise of teachers which underpin the very high standards. The staff's commitment to the individual support of students in small groups ensures that their learning needs are extremely well met.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum meets the needs of students, enabling them to achieve very high standards and become informed and active citizens. Through the courses they follow, the great majority of boys are enabled to move on to higher education, including many going to the most prestigious universities. The curriculum also very successfully promotes the boys' personal development, in particular, encouraging them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The students' experiences are greatly enhanced by the extensive additional activities that enrich school life. Sport plays a major part here and many participate in the large number of school teams, some going on to gain representative honours at local, county and national level. Other clubs, along with activities within the arts, further broaden their experiences. Trips and visits within the United Kingdom and abroad, supplemented by foreign student exchanges, are highly valued and enjoyed by the boys. Visitors to the school share their life experiences and give the boys an insight into many areas of interest. The school has been cautious in developing the 14 -19 curriculum, particularly the vocational courses and sees this as a high priority in the near future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Procedures to safeguard students' welfare and well-being are good. The staff has an extremely high level of commitment to supporting students through their schooling. Carefully planned activities, frequently enlisting the support of senior students, ensure that new students are helped to settle quickly. Students report being very happy with the guidance they receive for choosing options in Years 9 and 11, and feel that the individualised support they receive for university applications is outstanding. Vocational aspirations are met well through a strong work experience programme, individual interviews with 'Connexions' staff and a strong commitment to place students leaving in Year 11 on an appropriate vocational pathway. One parent writes of '...the fantastic support given to my son while he was off school for a prolonged spell due to illness'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The headteacher and the governors provide outstanding leadership and management with a clear vision for the development of the school which builds on established strengths but also accurately identifies areas for improvement. The headteacher's vision and successful development of the school, through initiatives such as those associated with specialist science status and partnership with others have an outstanding and beneficial impact on students. There is currently a building programme to enhance further the provision for music and sports. The newly formed senior leadership team shows great enthusiasm for its role and shares this vision. The school has improved its systems for monitoring its performance; however, further work is needed in evaluating whether their actions have been successful and in sharing good practice. The governors have an effective committee structure, are committed to the success of the school and increasingly hold it to account. Financial management and control are very good. Governors are well informed, are highly supportive and act as critical friends to the senior management team.

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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	1	1
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	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?	2	1
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?	1	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	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	1	
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

29 September 2006 Dear Students Watford Grammar School for Boys, Rickmansworth Road, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD18 7JF As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the outcome of the inspection. However, I would first like to thank you for your openness and cooperation during our visit. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. We were impressed with your honesty and loyalty to the school. It was clearly evident from your comments that you very much enjoy attending. The inspection found that this is an outstanding school. You are set challenging targets and exam results are consistently high. You make excellent progress. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is impressive, particularly as there is a huge building programme taking place. You have excellent attitudes to your learning. Besides the numerous GCSE and A Level courses to choose from, you participate in an impressive list of extra-curricular activities which you clearly enjoy. The school council is increasingly having an input into the direction of the school. Your tutors and teachers offer you very good support. You and your parents appreciate the regular information about your progress. Relationships in the school are very strong. All this adds up to a very effective education for you. There are some areas where the school recognises it needs to develop further. In a few lessons, the work is very hard for some of you and not challenging enough for others. You told me that you appreciate teachers giving you clear advice about how to improve your work, but that this does not yet happen consistently in all subjects. I encouraged senior staff to share the good practice of some subject leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and progress in their areas, so that there is greater consistency across the school. We are confident that the school will continue to improve. We hope that when the new facilities are built that you will have access to even greater opportunities to broaden your curriculum. We wish you well in the future. Rashida Sharif (Her Majesty's Inspector)