

Newport Girls' High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123561
Local Authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	292712
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Clive Kempton HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	275
6th form	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathryn Foster
Headteacher	Edwina Gleeson
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2002
School address	Wellington Road Newport TF10 7HL
Telephone number	01952 386400
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Newport Girls' is a popular and oversubscribed school. Priority for places in Year 7 goes to Newport pupils; thereafter pupils come from a wide surrounding area. The school became a Maths and Computing specialist school in September 2005. The thriving sixth form admits half of its students from neighbouring schools and collaborates with other providers to broaden curricular choice. The ethos of the school is friendly and welcoming but is one which values high standards in all aspects of school life. Girls' attainment on entry is well above the national average, as is the socio-economic status of the vast majority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Newport Girls' High is an outstanding school that not only achieves exceptionally high academic standards, but also places equal focus on the girls' personal development. One parent commented, 'It feels like an extended family, providing excellent provision for every girl in every area'. As a result, confident, diligent young women develop, equipped to take their place in society.

Standards achieved in the main school and in the sixth form are among the highest in the country, well above those achieved in most schools. This is to be expected, as girls enter the school with equally high levels of attainment relative to age-related expectations. This represents good progress as they move through the school. These standards are achieved through good and often outstanding teaching where teachers go out of their way to ensure that all girls receive the necessary support they need to achieve these consistently high standards. This academic support and guidance also extends to the girls' personal welfare, and pastoral care too is outstanding. The house system bonds staff and girls together and energises them into joint activities that support their outstanding personal development. Charity events are arranged by the girls themselves and their level of fund raising for Red Nose Day and cancer charities is impressive. A representative from a charity connected with the school said of the girls, 'They have big open hearts and a worldly awareness'. Girls take initiative, become leaders, grow in confidence and are genuinely a pleasure to talk to.

Outstanding leadership and management throughout the school are the cause of the school's tremendous success. The headteacher sets a clear educational direction. Quietly determined and never complacent, she leads a senior team equally committed to improvement. Of note since the last inspection is how the leadership has managed a major on-site building programme and a doubling in pupil numbers without detriment to the exceptional academic standards. The senior management knows the school's strengths and areas for further development very well and ensures that all the middle managers are accountable for standards within their own subject areas. They also accept that whilst the overall quality of teaching is good, there are variations, and the monitoring of teaching is currently insufficiently formalised. For example, some teachers mark girls' work better than others.

The maths and computing specialist status has added an important dimension to the school and is already beginning to have an impact on standards and the overall ethos of the school. The challenging targets set for the specialist subjects were not only achieved but also exceeded in 2006.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Sixth form provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good so that students achieve well, sometimes very well. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and build up a good rapport with their classes. Care, guidance and support are outstanding, and students' personal development is too. Those who join the sixth form from other schools speak highly of the induction programme and how welcome they feel in the school. Students say how much they value the personal, social and health education programme as it prepares them for life after school. Careers education is very good and students benefit from three days of work-shadowing in Year 12. Last year all students who wanted to went on to higher education. The school offers

an appropriate curriculum for its students, although some say they would like a timetabled physical education slot in the sixth form and more talks from adults from different professions. Leadership and management are outstanding. Students consistently express a very positive view of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Devise a more rigorous system for monitoring the quality of teaching.
- Ensure the consistency of marking so that all girls know how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are very high throughout the school. In 2006, for example, the school's GCSE results placed it second in the national table. Nearly three quarters of the grades were at A* and A, and over a third of students gained an A* or A in every subject they took.

Students enter the school with standards well above the national average. Achievement is good. Students make good progress in Key Stage 3 overall. Progress is not outstanding as there is variation in the girls' achievement in the core subjects. In mathematics, for example, one of the school's specialist subjects, progress is outstanding, with almost three-quarters of the girls getting the highest Level 8 in the national tests last summer. Progress in science is good. In English there is some variation but the situation is being addressed. The current Year 9 is doing well, particularly in writing.

At Key Stage 4, students continue to make good progress and all the girls exceeded the national expectation of five A* to C grades in 2006. The school's targets for GCSE performance were fully met in the last two years and there is an appropriate target set for 2007. The most recent set of results, excepting subjects with a low entry, show a high percentage of A* grades in the separate sciences, German and in history, where 88% of a comparatively large entry gained the highest grade.

A-level results indicate that progress is good overall in the sixth form, with some examples of outstanding achievement. School data shows that students who join the sixth form from other schools do as well as those who entered in Year 7, partly because of the excellent induction programme.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of the girls is outstanding. Visitors are struck by their impeccable behaviour and courtesy. In lessons, all the girls adopt positive attitudes, take an active part and tangibly enjoy learning. Their attendance rate at school, as a consequence, is well above the national average.

The girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. They are provided with a wealth of rich opportunities to travel abroad for both social and cultural visits. Regular trips are the norm. Art visits to New York and Paris, long- weekend social and cultural visits to Dublin, and visits to local places of interest to support aspects of the curriculum all deepen and enrich life experiences. Opportunities to take responsibility and develop confidence and initiative

are plentiful within the house system and through the numerous charity fund-raising events such as whole-school sponsored walks and regular cake sales. Charity fund-raising events are entirely organised by the girls themselves and usually raise in excess of five thousand pounds each year. Considerable enterprise skills are developed in the process. Sixth form girls also mentor younger ones and this is appreciated by both parties. Spiritual development is enhanced through assemblies, the high quality art work displayed extensively around the school, and aspects of the outstanding teaching by some of the staff. Girls are also aware of local and global issues, recycle waste paper in school and take part in Local Democracy discussions with the local council.

There is little bullying or name calling in the school and any reported incidents are rapidly dealt with. Girls know what is required to stay healthy and lead an active lifestyle, although some choose not to. A small number of girls, however, have been recognised for their individual sporting achievement and included in national squads, for example, orienteering, climbing and synchronised swimming. The school council are in discussion with the catering staff to provide more variety in the menu and greater value for money.

Girls are prepared well for the world of work through good personal, social and health education lessons and careers support and through specific projects as part of the specialist school programme. For example, some girls have been working with a local engineering firm to design and make stress gauges that are now being used to test the strain on a component on a production line. Such challenges, as well as using advanced mathematical skills with a real sense of purpose in the workplace, have also personally developed and inspired individuals to pursue a career in engineering.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. There are many examples of outstanding teaching and a few satisfactory. Teachers are well-qualified specialists who have high expectations both of girls' performance and behaviour. They prepare challenging lessons, well matched to the girls' abilities. Very positive relationships between teachers and girls contribute to the strong learning culture evident within lessons.

Recent initiatives have strengthened the use of assessment to enhance learning. The school is using data to track the girls' progress and teachers are using this data effectively in their planning of lessons. This is evident in their use of well-thought-out questions relevant to each girl's ability. Further evidence that the effective use of assessment for learning is being embedded throughout the school is that lesson objectives are routinely shared with the pupils. In the less successful lessons, however, teachers do not always make the expected outcomes for girls' learning clear and measurable. Standards of marking vary. Where the marking is good, concise and constructive comments are used to advise the pupils on how to improve, but this practice is not universal across all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Despite being a small school, the curriculum provision is outstanding. All statutory requirements are met. A wider range of course options is being offered as the school increases in size; for example, Business Studies at GCSE and a vocational course at A-level, and Psychology at A-level are all new initiatives. Sixth form options are extended through collaboration with neighbouring further education institutions.

The school's specialist status in Maths and Computing has had a positive effect on the curriculum, one example of which is that the most able students are offered AS-level mathematics and information and communication technology from Year 9, enabling them to achieve two AS-level qualifications by the end of Year 11.

There are many opportunities for work-related learning both within and beyond lessons, which are further enhanced by good links with local businesses. A range of educational trips is available and taken up by the girls, for example, a fieldwork geography trip to Ironbridge and the Long Mynd Hills. The offer and uptake of extra curricular activities is impressive, all of which contribute to the girls' rich and interesting experience. This breadth of opportunity ensures that girls are very well prepared for their future, and are able to develop strong leadership and team-working skills. One parent commented, 'My daughter enjoys every aspect of the curriculum and has discovered new subjects which have broadened and enhanced her enjoyment and learning potential'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support of students are outstanding. There are very effective induction procedures into the sixth form and close links with the primary schools help Year 7 pupils to settle in quickly.

Secure child protection procedures and risk assessments fulfil statutory requirements and ensure that pupils are kept safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and know there is someone to turn to if they need help. Younger pupils have access to personal help and advice from sixth formers specifically trained in this role, as well as adults, and they greatly appreciate this. As one parent observed, 'Older girls have time for and help younger girls, and in return, the younger girls find the older girls approachable and in no way intimidating'. A school counsellor is also available for confidential advice and support to individuals, adding a further aspect to the exceptional pastoral care.

At the end of each key stage, students are very well advised about option choices, which are well matched to their individual needs. Systems for monitoring students' academic progress are highly effective in identifying pupils at risk of underachievement early, allowing swift intervention. Teachers ensure that pupils know and understand clearly how well they are achieving and parents are regularly informed about their daughter's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of leadership and management throughout the school is outstanding. The headteacher leads with commitment and purpose in pursuit of excellence. She remains open-minded about new initiatives and embraces change with determination. Her senior team are accountable and drive with equal energy, each line-managing a variety of subject areas well. Self-evaluation at a whole-school level is accurate and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. The senior team are a potent force and have outstanding capacity to further improve the school. What they decide to do, they do very well.

Subject self-evaluation is also accurate and regular. Individual subject leaders meet the senior management team every term to discuss issues within their department. Each meeting rigorously focuses on a different aspect of their management, such as a review of standards achieved, development planning, and resources required to support individual girls or curriculum innovation.

Senior and middle managers have a clear and accurate overview of the quality of teaching across the school, although currently there is no formalised system for monitoring and collating the results of the various teaching observations that take place. The lack of such a system prevents the evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching from contributing even more to the school's development. Such a system will become even more important to have in place as the school increases further in size.

Governance is good. Governors are increasingly involved in the life of the school and hold the school to account for standards achieved. They increasingly ask searching questions but realise the need for greater involvement when the school reviews its effectiveness.

Partners and other professionals involved with the school hold it in very high esteem and enjoy all their contacts with it. Local schools report that these contacts add significant value to their own schools, notably through mathematics and computer support as part of their specialist school links, where identified pupils receive additional challenge.

Parents share inspectors' view of the overall effectiveness of the school. The number of questionnaires returned to the inspection team confirmed their overwhelming support. 'The school is very approachable, very responsive and quick to deal with any issues'.

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.

Annex A

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	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
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?	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	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.

Annex A

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	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

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you extended to my colleagues and I when we visited your school in March. I thought you would like to know the outcomes of the inspection and what the staff could do to make the school even better.

- Your parents think you go to an outstanding school, and we agree.
- You are all very courteous and made us all very welcome. Your manners at all times in lessons and around the school are impeccable.
- It is very evident that you enjoy coming to school and working hard.
- All of your teachers work very hard to ensure that you are all appropriately challenged and provided with a broad range of experiences to help you develop into mature young women.
- The range of charity work you do is impressive, as are the opportunities you have to develop independence and initiative.
- We were impressed by the number of older girls who support younger ones.
- You have a wide range of opportunities to travel to other countries for social and cultural visits.
- Your school is very well led and managed by a strong team who are implementing all the changes to the school without it impacting on your standards.
- The art work around the school is impressive.
- The maths and computing specialism is beginning to have an impact in all your subjects across the school, and is providing you with more opportunities to enhance your learning in mathematics and ICT.
- The house system supports you all well. You obviously enjoy the wide range of leadership opportunities as well as the activities organised by house representatives.
- Adults in the school care a good deal about you and your welfare as well as supporting you in your academic work.

In order to make the school even better we have asked your headteacher and staff to:

- Devise a more rigorous system for monitoring the quality of teaching.
- Ensure the consistency of marking so that you all know how to improve your next piece of work.