

# Davison Church of England High School for Girls, Worthing

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126093
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	293468
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Metham 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>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	12–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1070
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	S Bishop
<b>Headteacher</b>	Della West
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 October 2002
<b>School address</b>	Selborne Road Worthing BN11 2JX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01903 233835
<b>Fax number</b>	01903 211417

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, an Additional Inspector and a Child Care Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a large and oversubscribed Church of England Voluntary Controlled school. Most girls enter aged 12 into Year 8, with average levels of attainment. Nearly a third of students in each year group gains admission to the school on regular church attendance criteria. The diocese plays an advisory role in matters relating to collective worship and some aspects of curriculum provision. Most students are of White British heritage with English as their first language. The school gained specialist technology status in 1999; this was renewed in 2006. In 2004 it gained the Sportsmark Gold, then in 2005 an International Schools Award and Artsmark Gold. It has Investor in People and Healthy Schools accreditation. The school runs on-site nursery and day-care provision to provide childcare facilities for its staff and the local community.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding strengths. Since its last inspection, the school has been going through a comprehensive review and reshaping of its organisation, curriculum, teaching and learning. What has not changed is the school's sturdy Christian ethos, which is seen as a strength by most students, staff and parents, even those who have no formal religious commitment. When asked to identify the school's greatest asset, senior students agreed that it is their reputation as 'Davison girls'. 'The way we are with other people, the way we are!' They are proud of the school, feel safe and are happy to be there. 'We're all girls. It influences the way we learn. We help each other.' There is an almost tangible sense of community which engages and supports girls of very disparate abilities and aspirations: 'Here everyone has a chance to be involved. It's being part of a really great community, not lots of separate groups.' Students' personal development is excellent.

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Girls enter Year 8 with average levels of attainment and achieve results significantly higher than the national average in most subjects, although not all, by the time they leave at the end of Year 11. They recognise the importance of achieving qualifications and developing skills that will open doors into future employment and have responded positively to good curriculum developments brought in to match their range of interests and ability. Vocational as well as academic courses are valued, not least because excellent guidance helps students make choices that are realistic and have clear progression to future education, training or employment. The careful tracking of individual progress, together with regular analysis of test results and in-school assessments, is leading to well directed pupil support, or challenge, to help raise standards. Lower attaining girls who are not identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities make less progress than others, and the school has identified the need to strengthen help for these students. Well-supported clubs and activities, community projects, booster classes, summer schools for gifted and talented students and the Youth University positively complement the main curriculum. Girls are well informed about health and safety issues and are generally sensible in their choices and attitudes.

Considerable time and enterprise support the school's specialist technology status. Much work is done with local middle schools, introducing computer-aided design, for example. Within school, information and communication technology (ICT) encourages creative cross-curricular projects and provides a 'virtual learning environment' - a school website that offers curriculum resources, research materials and a useful forum for staff-student communication. Most teaching is good and some is outstanding, displaying a combination of expertise, enthusiasm, inventiveness and sensitivity to students' concerns that positively fosters active and independent learning. Some teaching lacks that flair and flexibility, leading to over-direction by the teacher and unquestioning compliance in the students. The senior leadership team is aware of the need to spread good practice across all departments and is developing a strong programme of continuing professional development for academic and support staff. Amongst recent strategies to enhance teaching and learning is the introduction of 'flexidays'. These allow departments, either independently or collaboratively, to devote a whole day to a project that encourages investigation, analysis and creativity, or to focus on key activities such as coursework. The impact can be seen in improved results, especially in Years 10 and 11. Some are more successful, certainly more enthusiastically reported on by younger girls, than others, especially those involving a variety of activity and challenge.

The school's leadership and management are good. The headteacher has been a positive and persuasive force for change, supported by an equally excellent senior leadership team. They have worked collaboratively to tackle weaknesses and develop strengths in teaching and learning, to extend the curriculum and to improve the school's resources and facilities. They have a clear grasp of what needs to be done quickly and what will take time to become embedded and have measurable impact. The school's capacity for improvement is outstanding. Their vision and many of their skills are already matched in middle management, both of academic departments and of support teams; however, some pockets of relative weakness remain. Well-targeted support, careful monitoring and further professional development are being put in place; their impact is not yet quantifiable.

The previous inspection report highlighted the need for clearer communication with parents about students' progress. Much has been done since then to improve school-home links, for example through direct contact with tutors who take personal responsibility for girls' academic and pastoral care. Most responses to the parental questionnaire were very positive. This comment reflects a general theme: 'My daughter chose to attend Davison High School...As a Mum, I feel she benefits from the single-sex environment in that she does not have to hide her intelligence. Davison is very empowering for teenage girls.'

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

- Ensure that teaching in all year groups offers sufficient pace, variety and challenge to promote active learning.
- Review how those not formally identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities but who find learning difficult are supported and encouraged.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students enter Year 8 with average levels of attainment and make good progress through the school, reaching standards by the end of Year 11 that are above national averages in all key areas, although there are variations across subjects. There has been sustained improvement over the past three years. Despite small differences between some groups – those with learning difficulties and disabilities doing particularly well and those just bordering on having such needs doing relatively less well – the overall pattern is good. A dip in the performance of students across Years 8 and 9 in 2006 was attributable to staffing difficulties which have now been resolved. High standards and good progress in Years 10 and 11 reflect the success of recent curriculum developments. Seventy-two per cent of students gained five or more A\*–C grades at GCSE, significantly above the national average. Fifty-nine per cent gained five or more A\*–C grades including English and mathematics; again, this was above the national average.

There is evidence that careful analysis of in-school assessments has led to timely and effective interventions, such as targeted support for candidates at the borderline of GCSE grade C and adjustments to the entry of students for specific subjects. There is, however, no complacency; senior leaders are aware of the need to raise standards where currently attainment does not match that of the most successful subjects and to strengthen support for students who struggle with aspects of the curriculum but are not identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities.

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

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding aspect of the school. Participation in the many extra-curricular activities in sports and in the arts is high. Standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school are exceptionally high, with good levels of self-control a very noticeable feature. A small minority of parents expressed concern about low level disruption in lessons where the teaching does not fully engage students. Where such problems do arise, there is evidence of prompt and well-targeted action by the school. Girls are well informed and sensible about health and personal well-being. Younger girls value their residential experience at Lodge Hill which helps them form good relationships. Older students say that the school feels very safe. Attendance rates are above average and rising.

The excellent opportunities for girls to help each other and to take on service activities within the wider community are integral to school life. The school's charity fund-raising is impressive. Together with well-planned curriculum activities, including global citizenship, all this leads to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Workplace skills are developed very well through work experience and enterprise education. Particularly striking is the school's success in developing girls' self-confidence, their ability to articulate ideas fluently and their readiness to work collaboratively in a very productive way.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. There is evidence of outstanding teaching that actively engages and excites students, as well as of some that, while competent, lacks such flair and flexibility. Students recognise and respond very positively to confident subject knowledge, clear explanations, challenging concepts, a variety of pace and activity and teachers' readiness to build on ideas and experiences volunteered by the girls themselves. Where the teaching is very traditional, with the emphasis on learning by listening and looking rather than on active collaboration, girls tend to be quietly compliant. In many subjects, tasks are open-ended and allow girls to respond according to their abilities so that all feel challenged and capable of success. There are well thought out extension activities for the most able. ICT is used extensively as a versatile tool for teaching and learning.

Students, especially those in Years 10 and 11, speak very positively about the help and encouragement they are given by their teachers. There is a commitment to fulfilling individual potential that is clearly shared by staff and students and supported by the leadership team through curriculum development and monitoring. The school's programme of continuing professional development for teaching and support staff is having a perceptible and positive impact, disseminating modern study skills, for example, and developing ICT competences.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school's curriculum is good, thoughtfully adapted and extended since the last inspection. The needs of more academic students are well met through a wide range of GCSE courses, including individual sciences, and opportunities to move on to AS level in some subjects. The curriculum now includes more vocational options and some girls take up college-based courses

for one day a week. Opportunities for learning are extended through booster classes, visits and visitors, and the school's Youth University. Senior leaders regularly review and evaluate the impact of curriculum changes and recognise the need for further development, for example in aspects of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and in the vocational area. Well-targeted curriculum support is given to the relatively small number of students with formally identified learning and behavioural issues, clearly improving their progress and attainment. Those, however, who are not receiving such personalised support but whose study skills are still relatively tentative and basic find aspects of the curriculum difficult to grasp, and their progress reflects this. While students appreciate the recent expansion of vocational courses, the school leadership rightly sees scope for some vocational options to be offered at a higher and more challenging level as well as for further options to be provided.

The school's technology plan successfully draws on the expertise of advanced skills teachers to work with local middle schools on projects involving ICT and design skills. Within school, ICT resources support creative links between subjects and provide access to course materials and to regularly updated tracking of students' progress.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding area of the school's work. Much credit goes to form tutors, who lead both the pastoral care and the academic guidance of their tutor group, providing or organising support as needed. Tutors have access to accurate information from subject teachers about each girl's progress and use this to very good effect. They are supported by a very strong staff team able to give specialist help well matched to individual needs. Liaison with health care professionals, local employers, colleges and the diocese provides a particularly strong and accessible range of expertise to complement the school's own provision. Younger girls said their teachers would listen to them if they had concerns and that the 'Talk About a Problem' peer support group was very helpful. Older girls spoke highly of the commitment of teachers who 'will do everything they can to help'. They also appreciate and make good use of the extra study support on offer, including material on the school website. Advice about future education, training and employment is comprehensive and well matched to students' needs and aspirations.

A new project is being launched, called 'Student Voice', to encourage all students to feel actively involved in school improvement. Early indications are that it will be well supported, not least because the girls themselves are playing an influential part in determining the organisation and remit of this scheme.

Child protection measures are robust and, supervised by the premises manager, health and safety standards are high. The education visit coordinator ensures that careful risk assessments and thorough preparation are undertaken for school trips.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good, with outstanding strengths in the senior leadership team. The headteacher and her senior team share a clarity of vision, a constantly refreshed understanding of modern thinking about teaching and learning, a persuasive enthusiasm and a resilience that are driving the school through a process of self-review and development. The careful prioritising of investment in staff development, resources and facilities, together with

rigorous financial management, ensures that the school offers excellent value for money. There is no doubt that the school's capacity to improve is outstanding even though the impact of some recent initiatives is not yet quantifiable. There is a realistic sense of what is achievable and sustainable, whether it be curriculum development, community involvement or school improvement. The positive impact of many leadership initiatives can be seen in improving standards and achievement, rising attendance rates, falling exclusion numbers and upgraded resources. Well-advanced plans for a new modern language block, to be completed by September 2007, demonstrate a characteristic combination of financial shrewdness, practicality and flair. These qualities are not matched consistently at all levels of management, although many subject leaders and managers of support staff clearly understand and are enthusiastically implementing the leadership's vision.

The governing body, too, is working successfully through a process of change and development, to become more actively involved in planning and monitoring long-term strategy and short-term development, both of the main school and of the day care and nursery provision on site. The influence of the diocese is supportive rather than constricting. It helps to shape and sustain the school's ethos.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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>	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<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>	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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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
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

27 April 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Davison Church of England High School for Girls, Worthing, BN11 2JX

Thank you for the unfailingly cheerful and courteous way you made us feel welcome when we came to see how well your school is doing. It was a delight to find you so positive about the opportunities you have to achieve academic success and to develop a wide range of interests and skills. We were impressed by the loyalty and commitment you showed to your school and how happy you are to be part of it. Clearly being 'a Davison girl' is something to be proud of!

Yours is a good school with some outstanding strengths, well led by your headteacher and her team. We saw evidence of good teaching and effective learning. Your good progress reflects the way in which assessments of your work and your potential are used by most of your teachers to set you challenging yet manageable targets. Your teachers give you excellent support and guidance. It is important that you become independent learners, able to select and analyse information, to develop well-informed views and to present them persuasively. Many of you have already achieved that. It was good to hear that you feel very safe in school, unlikely to be bullied and confident that quick and effective action would be taken if you did have difficulties. We could see that your views are taken seriously and that each of you can make a very positive contribution to the life of the school. We liked your enthusiastic participation in an impressive range of clubs and activities, and the way you take up opportunities to help others. Your personal development is outstanding.

We have suggested to the school that you will do even better if all lessons have the variety of pace and approach needed to capture your attention and actively involve you. We have also recommended that there should be a review of the support given to those of you who find some aspects of your work difficult, so that you all fulfil your potential.

I wish you all continuing success and enjoyment.

Yours faithfully

Patricia Metham HMI