

Gordano School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131374
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	293744
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Sanderson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1407
6th form	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Strong
Headteacher	Graham Silverthorne
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002
School address	St Mary's Road Portishead Bristol BS20 7QR
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Age group	11–18
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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

Gordano School is a larger than average secondary school which has increased in size since the last inspection. Overall, there are slightly more boys than girls. Most students are of White British heritage and the number of students whose first language is not English is well below the national average. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below that found in most schools. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average. The school achieved specialist status in technology in 1997, was awarded 'Leading Edge' status in 2003 and became a training school in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Gordano School is a good school with some outstanding features. The headteacher provides the school with outstanding leadership. All levels of leadership and management, including governors, work well together with a shared sense of collective responsibility. The school has good systems of self-evaluation and is well aware of its strengths and those areas in need of improvement.

The school uses assessment data well to set students challenging targets. Students are aware of these targets and how well they are doing. Progress is monitored well and effective support is provided to those students who are identified as underachieving. This helps ensure that all students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make good progress through the school attaining high standards at the end of Years 9 and 11. The overall quality of teaching is good. However, there is variation in the quality of teaching and in students' progress across the school.

The personal development of students is good. They show good attitudes to learning and are keen to become fully involved in lessons. Relationships between students and staff are good as is behaviour in lessons and around the school. Students enjoy school. There was a slight dip in attendance last year but effective action taken by the school has ensured that attendance is now above the national average. Students make a particularly positive contribution to the school and the wider community. They also put into practice well their excellent understanding of what it means to live a healthy lifestyle. The care, guidance and support of students are outstanding. Students feel safe and well supported and this is contributing to their desire to do well. The Student Service Centre provides students with a wide range of very effective support and guidance. The overwhelming majority of parents share this positive view about the quality of education and care provided by the school. As one parent said 'I am continually impressed at the level of commitment shown by the teachers whose primary motivation is obviously the welfare and progress of the pupils'.

The curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs and interests of students extremely well. There is excellent provision for preparing students for the next stage of their education and for the world of work. The school has made good use of its specialist status by improving information and communication technology (ICT) resources, developing its curriculum and strengthening links with feeder primary schools and the local business community. These initiatives have had a positive impact on students' learning. The school has addressed the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection and standards have remained high. The school has good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

This is a good sixth form, with some outstanding features that help make it very popular with students, parents and the wider community. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. A particular strength is the high quality care and guidance resulting in excellent personal development. Through their work with younger students, the part they play in the local community and their contribution to the life of the school, students are excellent role models and ambassadors. They have high aspirations and are prepared to work very hard to achieve their ambitions. They are very well prepared for employment or further study, benefiting from

a well planned programme of tutorials and the opportunities to develop their own leadership skills.

Teaching is good and students make good progress in their learning, achieving well to reach above national average standards at the end of Year 13. The curriculum is outstanding, being innovative and responsive to students' needs and aspirations. Extra-curricular activities and students' participation in them make a strong contribution to their personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the percentage of lessons that are good or outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are well above the national average and achievement is good. Students enter the school with standards that are slightly above the national average. By the end of Year 9 standards are well above the national average in mathematics and science and above in English. However, the percentage of students achieving the higher levels in English in 2006 was below the school's expectation.

The standards obtained at the end of Year 11 are well above the national average. However, the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades has remained at a similar level in recent years. All groups of students, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress through the school although there is variation in the progress made in different subjects. For example, in 2006 the progress made in design and technology and modern foreign languages was very good but in English it was satisfactory. The English department has taken effective action to improve students' progress during the last year and standards are beginning to rise.

Students enter Year 12 with standards that are broadly similar to that found in most sixth forms. By the end of Year 13 standards are well above the national average in academic courses and above the national average in vocational ones. The overall progress made by students is good. However, there is some variation in the progress made by students in different subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are good overall and outstanding in the sixth form. Students say this is a happy school. Behaviour both in lessons and around the school is good and students work well together and support each other. They value the fact that staff willingly give of their own time to support them. The house system also contributes towards students' understanding of working as part of a group and contributing towards a common goal. The student councils are effective bodies and have instigated many changes within the school. Students respond enthusiastically to the school's encouragement for them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The school gained the Healthy Schools Award in 2006 and a wide range of extra-curricular sports supports students well.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is fostered through religious studies and visits as well as through the arts. Although the school

has links with schools overseas there are relatively few opportunities for students to develop an understanding of living in a diverse community.

The involvement of students in both the school and local community is excellent. They actively support a school in Rwanda and organise many other fund-raising events. Opportunities to accept responsibility are many and the house system makes a significant contribution to this. The outstanding provision for enterprise and the commitment of the school to preparing students for the workplace help to ensure their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The overall quality of teaching is good. Lessons observed during the inspection ranged from outstanding to satisfactory. Lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives that teachers share with students. There are good relationships in classrooms. Students are keen to learn, particularly when they have the opportunity for active involvement in tasks. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to aid learning.

The good or better lessons have energy, pace and contain a variety of activities that engage and interest students. Good use is made of assessment information in these lessons to pitch tasks and activities at the appropriate level for all students. Students enjoy their work and make considerable effort, knowing what they have to do to improve and having the confidence to do so. In these lessons students make good or even better progress. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school. In some lessons students are too passive, activities do not fully engage them and they are not well matched to the students' abilities. The progress of students in these lessons is satisfactory.

Many teachers mark books well giving clear advice to students about how to improve their work. However, not all teachers mark books to this standard.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school's curriculum is outstanding. There is constant review, evaluation and innovative development of the curriculum to ensure that it best meets students' interests and abilities. In three subject areas students begin their GCSE courses in Year 9 allowing them to take examinations earlier than normal. There is an extremely broad range of both academic and vocational courses available for students to choose from in Years 10 to 13. This breadth is extended by some subjects being offered after school. These courses link very well with ones that are offered in the sixth form ensuring that students have continuity in their learning. Another strong feature of the curriculum is the 'Learning to Learn' courses that all students follow in Years 7 to 11. These courses are having a positive impact on students' learning.

The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular clubs, trips and activities. These are popular with and very well attended by students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The level of care, guidance and support students receive is outstanding. Students talk positively about how well they settled into the school on arrival and they valued the support Year 10 'buddies' gave them. Links with feeder primary schools are very good. Effective provision is made for those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those identified as having behavioural or attendance issues prior to transition.

Students feel safe in school and report that incidents of bullying are rare but when they do occur are dealt with very well by teachers. Safeguarding arrangements are secure. The needs of students with specific learning difficulties are met well. Parents feel their children have made excellent academic and social progress since joining the school. The commitment of all staff to their children's well-being was a feature of many of the responses in the parental questionnaire. Students who are underachieving are identified by house learning managers and intervention strategies, such as working with a learning mentor, put in place. Additional support is provided through a very well organised and multi-disciplinary team based in the Student Services Centre. An effective partnership with the education welfare service has raised the level of attendance which is now above the national average.

The academic guidance provided for students is excellent. They are set challenging targets, their progress is monitored well and effective support is provided. Very good advice is given to students when they have to make decisions about which courses they wish to follow.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is well supported by the leadership team. There is a clear vision for the school, based on high expectations, which is shared by all staff. Planning towards this goal is very effective, with a consultation process that involves everyone.

The school's own self-evaluation is accurate in its analysis of strengths and weaknesses. A culture of continual review is well embedded across the school. Recent developments in faculty self-evaluation provide a powerful tool for ongoing improvement. The implementation and impact of action to improve students' progress are monitored well through a line management structure. Areas of relative weakness are identified and middle managers are supported in improving performance. Already there is evidence that achievement is beginning to improve in English.

Stewardship of resources is highly efficient. Finances are tightly organised and effective systems are well administered by finance officers. The school is extremely well served by its governing body, which includes a lot of professional expertise. Governors are confident in exercising their duties, well informed and able to act as critical friends.

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?	2	2
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	2	2
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?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
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?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
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	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?	2	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	2	
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	2	
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

8 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Gordano School, Portishead, Bristol BS20 7QR

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school recently. We met and talked with many of you, sat in some of your lessons and looked at work that you had done. Now that we have finished the inspection we wanted to let you know our findings.

We judged that your school is good with some outstanding features as many of you and your parents told us. This is because your headteacher wants the very best for all of you and he leads the school extremely well. Throughout our time in the school you were helpful and courteous and we were impressed with your good behaviour and positive attitudes. You enjoy school and your attendance is good. Teachers and support staff in the school take extremely good care of you. You told us that you feel safe and that you know there is somebody to talk to if you are worried or concerned about something. Your student councils are active and the school listens to and responds to your views and opinions. Teaching is good and some of the teaching we saw was excellent. This helps you make good progress in your lessons and gain good results in tests and examinations. The school makes every effort to offer courses that will interest you and meet your individual needs. There is an excellent range of courses available for you to choose from in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. The school also provides a large number of after-school clubs and activities. It was good to hear that so many of you are involved in these.

Although your school is already good there is one important thing that would make it even better. In many of your lessons teachers plan for you to be involved in an interesting range of activities that are pitched at the right ability level for you. This helps you learn well. We have asked the school to ensure that even more of your lessons are like this.

Thank you again and I wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Peter Sanderson Her Majesty's Inspector