



The Cotswold School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115761
LEA Gloucestershire
Inspection number 294773
Inspection dates 8 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector Tom Winskill HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Bourton-on-the-Water
School category	Community		Cheltenham
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Gloucestershire GL54 2BD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01451 820554
Number on roll	925	Fax number	01451 810658
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Lady Mavis Dunrossil
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs A Holland

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

This inspection was undertaken by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. Three paired lesson observations and a number of informal visits to lessons in different subjects took place. Groups of students of all ages, including sixth formers, discussed their views of the school with inspectors, who also spoke informally to pupils in lessons and at other times during the school day. Inspectors received about 200 parent questionnaires and scrutinised students' work, school documentation and school data. The work of the school was evaluated with key members of staff and governors through formal meetings and informal discussions.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller-than-average comprehensive school with language specialist status. The sixth form of 164 in this Leading Edge school has grown rapidly and is set to grow further. Set in the tourist town of Bourton-on-the-Water, it serves a large rural area with a mixed socio-economic background. The percentages of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, or have English as an additional language or statements of special educational need, are all low. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Attainment on entry is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The inspector's discussion with pupils was going well. Lively, confident, interested, happy and well-motivated pupils were giving an honest, well-articulated and very positive view of their school. They enjoy coming to school where they feel safe and welcome; they know what they are expected to achieve and how to do it. They know that their views are valued and respected. The inspector then enquired as to what were the bad bits, the negative points. The silence was deafening! It was the only question pupils were unable to answer.

How good is this school? One parent, in response to the questionnaire sent out by the school for the inspection, provides a perceptive and accurate answer.

'My daughter has settled exceptionally well at school even though she didn't know anyone at first. The high expectations, assertive discipline and rigorous assessment have enabled her to reach academic standards with which we are very pleased. This, coupled with the range of extra-curricular opportunities and the caring approach to her pastoral needs, provided an exceptional package which is hard to beat. There is no doubt in my mind that this is an excellent school.'

There is no doubt in inspectors' minds either. This is an outstanding school. The students make good progress and those who stay on to the sixth form progress very well indeed. In addition, students' personal development is impressive. Their academic and personal achievements are due to a combination of the ever-evolving curriculum, high quality teaching together with care, guidance and support of the highest order. The school is continually striving for further improvement. Its self-evaluation procedures need to focus more sharply on progress and learning in order to inform its plans for further refining the quality of teaching. Recent developments in assessment should also be rigorously embedded across the school. These points already feature in the school's plans for improvement. School leaders at all levels rightly recognise that achievement and standards can be raised still further.

What sets this school apart is not just the high degree of professionalism exhibited by its staff. At its heart is a blazing passion to ensure every student is able to be the best they can be in all aspects of their development. The school takes the view that no barrier to learning and development is too high. This is embodied in the leadership provided by the headteacher. She is tenacious, relentless and successful in implementing the strategies which will bring about her vision for the school. Her staff share her commitment. As a result there is a wonderful sense of community, where all students are valued equally and where students have an important say in the life of the school. Staff and pupils have a high degree of trust in and respect for one another. In addition, parents hold the school in high esteem. As one parent succinctly stated: 'Excellent school that has taken the time and trouble to bring out the best in my daughter. What more could you want?'

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The school is rightly proud of its rapidly expanding sixth form, which is outstanding. Sixth formers themselves accurately and perceptively attribute this success to several factors. They have very good relationships with teachers, who provide support but also push and challenge them. They are strongly encouraged to work independently and continued individual assessment ensures they are on track and being extended. They play a full part in the life of the school and feel trusted as young adults. One parent commented that, 'Our son has received an excellent, well-rounded education. There are so many available opportunities in the sixth form.'

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Achievement and standards are good overall and outstanding in the sixth form. Students make good progress through the school and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress. Progress in the sixth form is also excellent. There is an inclusive ethos which genuinely values and celebrates each student's achievements. As one student commented, 'It's cool to be keen.' This ethos, together with the good quality teaching and a curriculum which is becoming increasingly well matched to students' needs, enables all students to achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Attitudes and behaviour are exemplary, underpinned by very positive relationships between all members of the school community. Pupils themselves comment how approachable the teachers are and a parent endorsed the school's inclusive approach thus: 'The school has a good system of pastoral care and both my children have always felt safe and happy at school. In general, staff are responsive to both pupils and parents and concerns are dealt with promptly. Staff have good relationships with pupils and encourage pupils to learn.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some outstanding features; teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Parents also appreciate the efforts of the staff. 'We are very lucky to have a school like the Cotswold School on our doorstep. I have three

children; all have been to the school and have been very happy and gained good exam results, which is due to excellent teaching. I cannot praise the school enough.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Through listening to students, analysing data and noting the findings of educational research, the outstanding curriculum is continually being adapted to better meet the needs of all pupils. The increasing breadth of provision at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is a key factor in enabling students to make good or better progress. 'Our daughter has made excellent progress at the Cotswold School and has been able to take advantage of many extra-curricular activities.' This parental comment also recognises more than just academic achievement. The taught curriculum and the myriad of extra-curricular activity make a huge contribution to the students' personal development and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is well summarised by the following parental comment: 'We are very pleased with how our son has settled in at school. He has progressed well and grown in confidence. We selected the school because of its caring attitude together with the view that the school is a place for study and pupils would be expected to work hard in their studies. The school has been approachable and dealt with any concerns.' Not surprisingly, care, guidance and support are outstanding, beginning with the transition from primary schools through to the end of the sixth form. Those who choose not to join the sixth form are also very well supported and guided.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher demonstrates a clear strategic vision of continuous improvement together with the human touch which keeps her personally aware of the lives of individual students. She is very well supported by an extremely capable senior leadership team and a governing body which the head considers to be 'second to none.' Middle management is at least good and often outstanding. Leaders and managers make excellent use of the high level of autonomy they enjoy through the supported delegation of responsibilities. All share a relentless drive for improvement, underpinned by very effective self-evaluation. This self-evaluation and the track record of improvement demonstrate the school's clear capacity for further improvement. Given a revenue typical of many schools of this size, the quality of education provided means that value for money is outstanding.

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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 quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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; 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, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
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 are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to tell you about our findings from our inspection on the 8 June 2006. Your friendly and positive approach made us feel very welcome.

The Cotswold School is an outstanding school. Students make good progress and gain good exam results. In the sixth form, progress is excellent. Your behaviour is superb and you get on very well with your teachers. You feel safe and enjoy coming to school and make the most of the wide range of opportunities the school provides.

Your school is very well run by the headteacher and her senior staff, supported by the school governors. They, and the rest of the school staff, have your best interests in mind at all times. They are very determined that every one of you has a chance to develop and succeed. They listen to your views and try to act on them whenever possible.

You are well taught and we think the school can improve even further by looking even more closely at how well you learn in class and over time. This will help you to reach even higher standards when you next have to do public tests and examinations. I know you will want to work together with your teachers to try to make these improvements.

I am looking forward to finding out about more successes at the Cotswold School in future.