

# Brentford School for Girls

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102536
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hounslow
<b>Inspection number</b>	308043
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Kennedy 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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	889
Sixth form	142
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Chris Benn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Julie Tomkins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 October 2004
<b>School address</b>	5 Boston Manor Road Brentford TW8 0PG
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8847 4281
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8568 2093

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Brentford School for Girls is a smaller-than-average, single-sex comprehensive school, although numbers in Year 7 and in the sixth form are rising. Students come from diverse social, linguistic, faith and ethnic backgrounds. A large proportion of students, two fifths, travel from inner London boroughs. Students come from a wide range of feeder schools, an average of 75 in any one year. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above average. Almost three quarters of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds; the largest proportions are from Pakistani, Indian, Somali and Afghan heritages. There are an above-average number of students for whom English is not their mother tongue. A high proportion of these have little or no fluency in English. An above-average number of students start or leave school at other than the expected times. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average and increasing, while the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is average. The majority of these students have specific or moderate learning difficulties.

The school became a Specialist Media Arts College in September 2007 and it provides the full range of extended school services. It is part of a consortium of four schools offering sixth form provision. Among its accreditations, the school holds the Artsmark Silver, Basic Skills Quality and Investors in People awards, and it has achieved Healthy Schools status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Brentford School for Girls provides a satisfactory standard of education and is an improving school. This judgement reflects the school's own accurate evaluation of its own performance. The vast majority of parents wrote positively of the school and its considerable strengths, particularly in the quality of its pastoral care and the excellent relationship between teachers and students. These provide the foundation for the girls' good personal development. Outstanding social harmony, inclusion and cohesiveness are pervasive in this diverse school community and are reflected in the students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

When students start at the school, their attainment is below average. They make good progress in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress overall. Students achieve standards at the end of Key Stage 4 which are slightly below average. However, performance in subjects has been variable and this is linked to inconsistent teaching and learning, variability in the achievement of particular groups of students, inconsistent middle management and staffing difficulties in some departments. Consequently, for example, standards in science at Key Stage 3 have been below average, and in 2008 GCSE results in mathematics were disappointing. At the same time, performance in subjects such as English has remained good and there were improvements in the percentage of A\* to C grades in 10 subject areas. Current evidence indicates that standards and achievement are improving across the school. Staffing has been stabilised and improvements are evident, for instance in science and mathematics. Students are on track to meet their targets for 2009, and there are now no significant variations in the performance of particular groups. However, despite good systems in place to promote attendance, some students, particularly in Years 10 and 11, are absent too frequently.

Partnership working is strong and is evidenced in the improving range of curriculum options. However, the school is not complacent and recognises that there is further work to do to match provision to the needs of all students, particularly those with lower ability. The headteacher has been the driving force behind the drive for continuous improvement. Governors and a strong senior leadership team support her well, as do increasingly strong middle managers. They recognise that further work is needed to consolidate improvements and eradicate inconsistency in teaching and learning, and improve the performance of all departments and the quality of academic guidance that students receive.

The media arts specialism is having considerable impact on higher standards achieved in English, information and communication technology (ICT) and drama, and on the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum as a whole. The school has made considerable improvements since the last inspection, and with secure systems in place, it has good capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Standards and achievement have risen steadily and this is reflected in the increased popularity of the sixth form. Standards and achievement are satisfactory in relation to students' overall starting points, which are low or very low for some students, particularly in Year 13. Some students achieve very well and 2008 A-level results indicate good performance in subjects such as English, mathematics, economics and textiles, and very good achievement in subjects such

as applied ICT. Pass rates on AS-level courses, which had been above average, dipped in 2008. Staffing difficulties in some subject areas contributed to this, as did a curriculum that did not fully meet the ability of some students. Despite this, a good proportion of students with lower ability exceeded expectations and achieved high grades. As with the rest of the school, teaching and learning have been variable with pockets of excellent practice. Leaders have taken strong action to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning across the school and the sixth form. Managers have tackled weaker performance in subjects such as chemistry, and students speak positively of these changes. The sixth form now provides a broader and more personalised curriculum to meet the diverse abilities and aspirations of its students. However, while students can study religious education (RE) through the consortium, there has been insufficient opportunity for all sixth-formers to avail themselves of it. The school will be meeting curriculum requirements through its revisions planned for 2009.

Students are mature, confident and responsible. Personal development is good and is particularly strong in terms of the positive contribution sixth-formers make to the school as a whole. A powerful Year 9–10 assembly, presented by students who had been to visit Auschwitz, exemplified this during the inspection. However, the attendance of some is a cause for concern and limits their chances to do well. Steps to tackle this have been enhanced since September by more secure tracking systems, the appointment of staff mentors and a part-time Attendance Officer. Staff prepare students well for life after school and provide good support and encouragement to those who want to go on to further education. Students value the support they receive from their teachers. However, as with the main school, the guidance given by some teachers is not focused sharply enough on what they need to do make faster progress.

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

- Ensure that leadership and management at all levels is consistently good across the school, so that standards rise to more consistent levels across subjects.
- Ensure that in all lessons students know exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the attendance of students in the school and sixth form, especially that of those who underachieve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

When they first arrive, students' attainment is below average, particularly in English and mathematics. Progress is good at Key Stage 3. Students make satisfactory progress overall and achieve slightly below average standards at the end of Year 11. In Key Stage 3 standards in English have been consistently high and students make good progress. Attainment in mathematics is below national expectations but achievement is good. Standards in science have been well below the national average. However, 2008 Key Stage 3 test results indicate that good improvement has been made in respect of students achieving higher levels. Key Stage 4 standards and achievement are broadly in line with national expectations. Results in 2008 indicate that standards improved in some subjects, for instance history and modern foreign languages, and students achieved well. There was also an increase in the proportion of students achieving at the highest levels (A\* to A). However, standards remain low in RE and physical education (PE) and they dipped in mathematics where there had previously been good

performance. This was primarily due to staffing difficulties and its impact on teaching and learning.

The school has taken corrective action to raise standards where there has been variability and current evidence indicates this is having a positive impact, for instance in mathematics, science and PE. Some students have consistently achieved well, particularly those with English as an additional language and those entitled to free school meals. However, the school has rightly identified that there has been underachievement among White British students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. More rigorous targeting, intervention and support are having an impact and there is now no significant variation in the performance of any group. However, poor attendance of a minority of students, particularly in Key Stage 4, is preventing them from reaching their potential.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Positive relationships between staff and students and effective pastoral care contribute well to students' good personal development and well-being. Students adopt safe practices and are well aware of how to live healthy lifestyles. This is helped considerably by the support provided through Pupil Services, and specific staff such as the Wellbeing Coordinator. Most students enjoy school, have positive attitudes to their learning and attend well. However, despite the best efforts of the school, some of them, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, have poor attendance and this partly explains why their progress is not as good as it could be. The school has clear and high expectations of behaviour and most students respond well. Exclusions are low. There has been a significant reduction in fixed-term exclusions this term and an increase in positive behaviour in the classroom. Students' own contribution to the school and the wider community is exemplary. It can be seen in a very effective school council and in the wide range of well-trained peer mentors, anti-bullying committee (ABC) mentors and buddies. Their work extends beyond the school, for instance as seen in youth action projects in the local community. Their contribution reaches the global community through links with schools in Kenya and Rwanda. These initiatives and outcomes contribute well to outstanding community cohesion. An improved and more personalised curriculum, with good opportunities for enterprise education, prepares students well for life after school and the vast majority go on to further education, employment or training.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although outstanding practice is evident, particularly in the school's specialist subjects, there is still significant variation in the quality of lessons between subjects and teachers. The best lessons fully engage students because they are well paced and they offer a good blend of challenge and support. Learning objectives are sharply focused, so students fully understand what they need to achieve by the end of the lesson. In less effective lessons students make only satisfactory progress because tasks are not challenging enough and the pace of learning is too slow. On some occasions this results in small groups of students becoming inattentive. In a number of lessons teachers do not share the success criteria with students, which results in their not knowing whether they have made good progress. Marking is inconsistent across the school. Although most teachers make effective use of 'what

went well' (www) and 'even better if' (ebi) to recap at the end of lessons, guidance on how to improve is not always focused on learning. The school has a clear understanding of where strengths and weaknesses lie in teaching and learning and it has directed support to improve provision in the areas that are weaker. Plans are securely in place to use the specialist subjects and teachers to share good practice, although it is too soon for these actions to have had an impact across all subject areas in the school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory, although it has some good features. Since the last inspection, the school has made progress in developing a curriculum that better matches the diverse needs of its students. The school has been working effectively with partners to deliver the Creative and Media Diploma since September 2008 and plans for the Society, Health and Development Diploma are on track for 2009. The growing number of academic and vocational courses available within the school has increased the range of options and pathways available. The school knows that further work is needed to develop more personalised pathways, particularly for less able students. For younger students, an integrated learning course has been introduced to ease the transition from primary school and to develop skills for learning. Monitoring shows that this provision has proved popular and provides good support for transition. However, as with other curriculum innovations, it is too early to measure the sustained impact on raising standards. The school's specialism in media arts contributes well to curriculum enrichment, and gives students the opportunity to work with local arts organisations such as the Waterman's Arts Centre and with a professional artist-in-residence. ICT provision has improved and is used well to enhance teaching and learning and improve other curriculum areas. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, although rigorous monitoring of participation rates has not yet taken place.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors agree with the positive comments from students and parents about the quality of care and support their children receive. Teachers and staff, such as those in Pupil Services, provide very good pastoral care and support. Effective communication with subject departments ensures that there is a coordinated approach to provision, with a particular focus on promoting equality of opportunity and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. Recent appointments, such as a Somali Learning Mentor, have enhanced the quality of available support. New students settle in well because of carefully planned curricular and pastoral provision. Systems for managing behaviour, attendance and safeguarding are robust. Effective partnership with other agencies ensures that there is a broad range of individual and group support programmes on offer, such as a six-week anger management programme and counselling services. Students who have English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from well-trained staff. Systems to track and monitor students' progress and target interventions to improve achievement have improved. However, the quality of academic guidance given to students is inconsistent across subjects. In some departments, such as English, students receive very good support and are shown exactly how to improve through marking, verbal feedback and the rigorous monitoring of their progress. In other departments they receive guidance that is too vague to help them progress at a faster rate.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There are considerable strengths at senior leadership levels and growing capacity among middle managers. The dynamic headteacher has a good understanding of the actions required to drive up academic standards and raise expectations of learning from both staff and students. Staff now have a shared sense of purpose and commitment to raising standards and setting challenging targets. The school uses resources well to sustain this improvement and it provides good value for money. Staff, governors, parents and students speak positively about improvements they have seen. The school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion through, for instance, its work with growing numbers of families from Polish and Somali communities, and planned international events for students and their parents. The turnover of staff has now stabilised. The school knows its strengths and areas for further development and managers are taking appropriate action to tackle shortcomings. Middle managers are becoming more effective and are well supported through targeted professional development. They have honed their focus on using data to assess students' progress systematically. However, the quality of evaluation and use of data has not yet been sufficiently rigorous or consistent across all subject areas. The school is tackling this through a range of newly introduced strategies, for example, the use of termly cross-school subject intervention meetings, where staff use data to target intervention for underachieving pupils. It is too early yet for this development to have had measurable impact. Governors are supportive of the school and use their professional expertise to good effect. However, more could be done to strengthen the sharpness of their monitoring, particularly in relation to the progress students are making.





## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

## Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
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	3	
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	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

03 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Brentford School for Girls, Brentford, TW8 0PG

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed speaking with you and seeing you at work. You, and your parents, were very positive about how much the school has improved. We could see this, for example, in the increased range of subjects you have, the good relationships you have with each other and your teachers and the very good pastoral care you receive. One of you described your school as 'close knit' and we believe that this harmony is one of your great strengths. You do lots to make your school and the world outside a better place and we believe the contribution you make to helping others is outstanding. Most of you enjoy school and attend well. However, some of you, particularly in Years 10, 11 and in the sixth form, have poor attendance and despite how hard your teachers and other staff try, if you are not in school, you will not do as well as you could.

You told us that some of your lessons are not of the same high standards as others and we agree. Sometimes this is because of changes in teachers and sometimes it is because the quality of teaching and learning in some departments has not been consistently good. This is changing because of the strong action being taken by the headteacher and other managers. It is too early yet to see the full impact of this. You do well in your exams and most of you have improved on how well you were doing in primary schools. The staff do a good job in caring for you and there is lots of extra support available if you need it. You told us that you are lucky to have a very good headteacher. We agree. Other staff at all levels support her well. They have set a target for themselves to improve the quality of learning across the school and sixth form. To help this, we have asked the school to:

- make sure that managers in every department are raising standards
- make sure that in all lessons you know exactly what you need to do to improve
- improve the attendance of those who could do better.

You can play your part by making sure that you attend school regularly and continue to work hard in all your lessons. On behalf of the inspection team I wish you the very best for your futures.

Yours sincerely,

John Kennedy

Her Majesty's Inspector