

# Nonsuch High School for Girls

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103008
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sutton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308196
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Meena Wood 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>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1222
6th form	330
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs D Evans
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs G Espejo
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 December 2004
<b>School address</b>	Ewell Road Cheam Sutton SM3 8AB
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8394 1308
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8393 2307

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, and investigated students' progress and standards, the quality of teaching and learning, care, guidance and support and the curriculum, in the main school and the sixth form. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, and inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified.

## Description of the school

Nonsuch High School for Girls is a selective grammar school and specialises in science. The school has achieved Beacon Status, Healthy School status, Sports' Mark and Education Extra awards. A very few students are eligible for free school meals. A small number of students have some form of learning difficulty or disability. An increasing number of students, significantly above the national average, are from minority ethnic groups; the largest of these are originally from the Asian sub-continent and in particular, India and are fluent in languages other than English. The student population is very stable, with very few students leaving other than on completion of their studies.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Nonsuch High School for Girls is a good school with many outstanding features. The parents and students hold the school in high esteem. Their positive views are entirely justified. One parent summed up the views of many, 'The school has an excellent atmosphere of 'friendly learning' and a strong academic and moral ethos. Both my daughters are thriving academically and socially.'

The school is a truly vibrant community where students benefit from good teaching, an excellent curriculum, and excellent care, guidance and support. This results in students making good progress, attaining very high standards and developing outstanding personal qualities and well being. The key to the school's success is providing its students with a stimulating and supportive environment that helps them develop into confident, articulate and responsible young citizens.

Students arrive in school with very high prior attainment and the majority make good progress. By the time they reach Year 9 and Year 11, standards are exceptionally high. Students' standards in Year 9 have remained consistently high in mathematics and science but in English, in Year 9 and 11, students' standards, whilst well above the national average, have not been in line with those they attain in other subjects. The school's intake of students is changing and increasing numbers of students arrive in school with relatively lower prior attainment in English and this has had an impact on the standards and the progress they make. Standards in other subject areas, including information and communication technology (ICT), are well above average. Students with learning disabilities and difficulties make good progress.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and a real enthusiasm for their subjects that they are keen to transmit to their students, and this motivates students to want to succeed. The students respond well, enjoy their learning, and produce high standards of work in lessons. Learning objectives shared with students along with high quality marking and good probing questions in lessons give students clear guidance on how to improve their work, even if it is already of a high standard. However, in some cases, the learning of less confident or quieter students is not checked carefully enough. In the excellent lessons, a lively approach, and varied activities mean that the work is meeting the needs of all students. In one outstanding Year 10 lesson, students clearly demonstrated what they had learnt through electing to act out the principles of nuclear fission in innovative and highly enjoyable mini presentations. Most teachers are using interactive whiteboards effectively, both to present work and to develop students' ICT skills. Students, especially those in the sixth form, make good use of the school's intranet learning materials and schemes of work to revise and catch up on work missed. The school has recently focused more in lessons on extending challenge for students of higher ability and those deemed gifted and talented. Whilst most teachers are aware of students with lower prior attainment in English, the school has not yet developed a whole school approach to supporting their needs in lessons.

The school has been especially responsive to developing a curriculum that gives outstanding support for students' academic and personal development. Students enthusiastically subscribe to a range of extra curricular activities. Choices such as Greek and astronomy, as well as musical and many sports activities all serve to enhance their learning. Increased personalisation of the timetable enables more Year 10 students to fast track GCSE examinations in subjects such as mathematics and German, with good results. The school's specialist status has increased participation in the study of sciences, especially physics and chemistry, with the school meeting

its challenging targets and offering triple science. The school's science specialism has benefited students through SPLATS (Students Presenting Learning and Teaching in Science) with sixth formers working with local primary school children and through a taster programme for engineering and science. Partnership work with local schools is excellent. ICT facilities for students have improved significantly for all students. Work related learning is especially good in relation to finance capability that starts in Year 7 and work experience for Year 11 students. Not only do students develop excellent work place and higher education skills through the core subjects of mathematics, English and ICT, but they also have good opportunities in other subjects to develop team working and enterprise skills.

Academic guidance is excellent and based on a thorough knowledge of students' progress, with targets set regularly, in discussion with students and their parents. Recent changes in the way teachers discuss attainment targets with students, is helping them to achieve their potential and make even better progress. Year 9 students are well advised on their subject choices and Year 11 students are given good guidance on progression to further education and careers. The quality of pastoral care and support is excellent.

Through personal, social, health and citizenship education, students acquire a very good awareness of the issues relating to health and personal safety and know how to keep fit through sports and healthy eating. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Attendance and behaviour are exemplary and students feel safe in school. All students make a substantial contribution to the community through fund raising and other activities and this contributes very well to local and international community cohesion. They feel that they are consulted over the running of the school and their views taken seriously.

Leadership and management are outstanding with exemplary leadership by the head teacher and her highly committed and able management team. Since the last inspection, the headteacher, through very effective teamwork, has ensured a successful focus on addressing the few areas of improvement and further consolidating the school's strengths. Consequently, the school has a strong record of accomplishment in enabling students to maintain consistently high standards in all subjects, through fostering a love of learning and enjoyment in education. Monitoring and evaluation at senior level yield a good understanding of most areas requiring improvement. Rigour in teaching observations and staff appraisal systems contribute to the ethos of continuous improvement. Development plans use challenging targets to stimulate improvement; focusing well on outcomes for students and on exploiting further the school's specialist status. The governing body are committed to close, productive working with managers in terms of finance, developing well-resourced accommodation and a stable staff base. The school is very active in seeking and acting on parents' views and has developed sound channels of communication, including a website and weekly email to parents, but is aware that these can be improved further. The school's equalities plan has a strong focus on disability, although the school is still developing its action plan on race and reporting of this to parents. The way in which the school has maintained high standards, both academically and in students' personal development, is a clear indication of its outstanding capacity for future improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form is good with outstanding features. Progression of students from Year 11 to sixth form is very high at 90%. Students' progress is good with exceptionally high standards. A very high percentage of students take 5 AS levels and 4 A levels and a significant number gain high A/B grades in their subjects. Teaching and learning are good because teachers engage students

in their learning and help them develop good analytical and critical thinking skills. The director of the sixth form has been highly effective in responding to students' academic needs and has replaced GCE A level general studies with a compulsory GCE A level in critical thinking. Students have high aspirations, and benefit greatly from the broad curriculum that includes twelve Additional Extension A level courses.

The recently introduced mentoring sessions have improved monitoring of students' progress through structured target setting and clearer guidance for students on how to improve on their grades. Students enormously value the guidance they receive on their UCAS applications and the school is rightly proud of its record of successful higher education destinations, especially for those students progressing to Oxbridge. Students' contribution to community cohesion within the school is commendable as a significant number are trained mentors and work with younger students and those who need greater help with English writing skills. Sixth form students are proud of their responsibilities and one summed up by saying, 'It gives me such a sense of achievement when I help a student become more confident in her lessons and her teacher tells me that she has improved her grades as a result!'

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

Improve achievement and teaching and learning from good to outstanding through:

- greater targeted support for students with lower prior attainment in English
- more rigorous monitoring of progress and checking of learning in all lessons of those students who are less confident.

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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	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
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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

<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>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	1	
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**

08 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Nonsuch High School for Girls, Sutton, SM3 8AB

Following our recent visit to inspect your school, I am now writing to let you know about our findings. We would like to thank you for your contributions to the inspection. Thank you in particular to those who gave up time to talk to us. It was a pleasure meeting with you and listening to you talk about your best piece of work that you presented to us. We enjoyed sitting in your lessons, and observed that you are very well motivated, respectful, demonstrate exemplary behaviour and very much enjoy your learning.

Your school is a good school with many outstanding features. You informed us that you feel safe in the school, and benefit from the excellent choice of courses and wide range of extra curricular activities the school has to offer. The school works hard with you to help you to do exceptionally well in your examinations and course work. The teaching we saw was good because your teachers know you very well and plan lively and challenging lessons to help you make good progress. In these lessons, we were very impressed by your enthusiastic attitudes to learning and your high standards of work. The headteacher, senior staff and governors lead the school very well and continually encourage you to achieve your potential through creating a stimulating and supportive learning environment that helps you achieve very impressive results in your examinations at 16 and in the sixth form. As a result, you have developed into well-spoken, caring and responsible young women and leave the school well equipped for higher education and the world of work. Those of you in the sixth form are excellent role models for the younger students and perform a commendable job acting as their mentors.

In any school, there are ways to improve and I have asked the headteacher to focus on helping you to improve the progress you make by matching support to the needs of different groups of learners, especially in English, and by ensuring greater checking of your learning in all lessons.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector