

Oldfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109333
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	309965
Inspection date	22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Harrett HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	869
6th form	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Pryke
Headteacher	Kim Sparling
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Kelston Road Bath BA1 9AB
Telephone number	01225 423582
Fax number	01225 464986

Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools. The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and progress at Key Stage 4; teaching and learning, including assessment, target setting and tracking; and the quality of provision in the sixth form. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, scrutiny of documentation and discussions with students, staff and a representative of the governing body. The views of parents were collected and analysed from questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. It has Healthy Schools status and the Artsmark Gold award. Oldfield School has been designated a High Performing Specialist School. Its first specialism is in sport and its second specialism is in the arts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school in which the academic achievement of the students is excellent in Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form. Throughout the school, students make excellent progress in their personal development and well-being. As one parent said, 'The school provides a very comfortable and secure learning environment that acknowledges all round development. My daughter has gained tremendous confidence in her work and in herself.'

The key to the school's success is the superb quality of leadership and management. The headteacher provides vigorous and determined leadership with a clear focus on raising the standards of all the students in a caring and vibrant school community. In particular, the quality of the school's monitoring and self-evaluation is exemplary. Excellent systems ensure that the school's knowledge of itself is thorough and accurate, resulting in carefully targeted changes to provision which are regularly checked to ensure that they are effective. The governing body provides the school with excellent support and rigorous challenge. Subject leaders and those charged with ensuring the care and personal development of the students have a thorough understanding of strengths and areas for development and plan effectively to keep raising standards. Leadership of the specialist areas in sport and the arts ensures that they make an excellent contribution to all areas of the school's work. The outstanding quality of leadership and management has ensured that the school has improved since the last inspection and that its capacity to continue this trend is excellent.

Standards in the school are well above average overall and above average in the sixth form. Students enter the school with standards that are above average. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are well above average and all groups of students make excellent progress in their learning. Although there is some variation in standards at GCSE in different years, they are well above average overall. The students make excellent progress overall by the time they take GCSE examinations, but their progress is better from Years 7 to 9 than it is in Years 10 to 11, indicating that the already high standards at GCSE might be raised even further. Standards in the sixth form are above average and achievement is good.

The close monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by senior and middle managers ensures that they are outstanding overall and good in the sixth form. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects. The expectation of students of all abilities is clear and appropriately challenging. The brisk and purposeful pace in the very best lessons, matched by a suitable range of whole-class, group and individual activities, ensures that students enjoy their learning and become confident in their ability to make progress. The school has improved the systems by which it sets targets for the students and tracks their progress, refining them after seeking the views of teachers and students with characteristic thoroughness. Consequently, students know their targets and their current standards. These are shared helpfully with parents who receive very clear reports, which are carefully monitored by the school to ensure that they contain detailed specific advice on how the students can improve in particular areas. The reports are complemented by well attended meetings with parents and by individual meetings between students and their tutors. Leaving nothing to chance, the leadership of the school monitors the quality of these meetings as well. Specialist subjects play their part in improving the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the English department led training on improving literacy across the curriculum which was well received.

Teaching and learning take place within a curriculum which is excellent overall and good in the sixth form. It provides the students with clear and flexible pathways. They speak highly of the way in which the school informs and guides them and their parents when making their choices. The curriculum is constantly under review. Modifications, such as the successful introduction of new courses in science at GCSE, are carefully linked to students' needs and monitored to ensure the maximum impact on the students' enjoyment and achievement. The curriculum is enhanced by an excellent range of activities related to the specialist areas of sport and the arts, with well established links with other schools, businesses and organisations.

The personal development and well-being of the students is excellent. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education permeates the life and work of the school. Students thoroughly enjoy their studies and school life, speaking enthusiastically about the range of activities and opportunities available to them, often linked to the school's two specialist areas. They make full use of the opportunities for sport and dance, having a thorough understanding of how to lead healthy lives. Opportunities for leadership in sport and the arts abound. These make a significant contribution to students' self-esteem and help them to develop skills which will be essential for them in their future lives. Students feel safe in school and are confident that the rare instances of bullying or misbehaviour will be dealt with effectively. They speak very highly of the way the school deals with their personal worries and concerns, expressing complete confidence in the adults to whom they can turn. Their excellent personal development is underpinned by exemplary provision for their care and support. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent and any students whose behaviour is causing concern are given individually tailored advice and strategies for improving it, to which they respond positively. The thoroughness of these systems complements the system for tracking academic targets very well, so providing thorough monitoring of personal and academic development.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The excellence of achievement and guidance in the school ensures that the majority of the students continue with their education after GCSE. However, the proportion of the students who choose to stay at Oldfield is relatively small. There are many reasons for this, some linked to the distance that many students travel to the school and the desire of some students to move to larger, fully co-educational institutions for the next phase of their education. For those who stay, the school provides a good standard of education. Standards vary from year to year but are above average overall and were particularly high at Advanced Level in 2007. Achievement is good overall, particularly in Year 13. It is more variable at the end of Year 12. The school provides a good curriculum for those who stay at Oldfield, but the size of classes varies widely, with many being very small. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good, responding well to the different class sizes and the different standards of the students. The personal development and well-being of the students are excellent. Those who stay at Oldfield speak highly of the individual attention that they receive. Students respond well to the opportunities that they have to contribute to school life, helping with clubs and societies and contributing to the support for younger students in their learning. Students rightly think that their progress is monitored well. They also appreciate the careful and effective guidance that they receive in preparing for their life after school. The sixth form is well managed for those who are enrolled at the school, ensuring that the provision for the students makes the best of the resources available. Nevertheless, its small size is a barrier to its further development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress that students make in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure that achievement in all subjects is consistently good in the sixth form.
- Improve the size and viability of groups in some sixth form subjects.

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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?	1	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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
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 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?	1	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
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?	1	2
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	1	2
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, 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

Thank you very much for the welcome that you gave me when I visited your school.

I agree with you that Oldfield is an outstanding school which provides you with a superb education. You reach very high standards and make excellent progress in your learning. Your personal development is also excellent. This is because leaders and managers in the school regularly check how well the school is doing and make sure that they make changes to improve things when necessary. Consequently, you are taught very well and the school makes sure that lessons and the subjects on offer are interesting and challenging. Through the school's specialisms, you are given plenty of opportunities to take part in activities outside lessons and to take responsibility for leading initiatives and projects. You respond very well to this and play an active part in the life of the school. You told us that you really appreciate the way that the school looks after you and makes sure that you and your parents know how well you are doing and how you could improve your work.

Even in outstanding schools like yours, there are things that could be improved. You make excellent progress between Years 7 and 9, but standards could be even higher if this was extended into Years 10 and 11, where progress is currently good but not quite so impressive. Although achievement in the sixth form is good, it varies between subjects and is better in Year 13 than Year 12, so I have asked the school to improve this. Also, some groups in the sixth form are very small and I have asked the school to find ways to make them bigger.

23 November 2007



Dear Students

Inspection of Oldfield School, Bath, BA1 9AB

Thank you very much for the welcome that you gave me when I visited your school.

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Yours sincerely

Andrew Harrett HMI