

The Windsor Boys' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110056
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	310190
Inspection date	15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Maria Dawes HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	953
6th form	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Darren
Headteacher	Mr J Dawkins
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	1 Maidenhead Road Windsor SL4 5EH
Telephone number	01753 716060
Fax number	01753 833186

Age group	13-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues in detail: achievement and standards for different groups of learners, developments in teaching and academic guidance, the sixth form, the curriculum and the quality of middle leaders. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF), national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, other documents provided by the school, observations of the school at work, interviews with staff, students and governors and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school serves the town of Windsor. The majority of students come from four feeder middle schools. Approximately one-fifth of the boys are from minority ethnic groups, mostly from Pakistani or Indian background, and the proportion whose first language is not English is in line with that found nationally. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average, the majority with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or specific learning difficulties.

The school has a main specialism in Performing Arts and, from September 2007, it has been a National Support School. In addition, it has vocational and Raising Attainment and Transforming Learning (RATL) status. The four feeder middle schools have recently been given specialist status as Associate Arts Colleges with the school as an arts hub. The school has a Learning Support Unit based at the Windsor's Arts Centre (the school's major community partner) and has taken the lead in developing and running the East Berkshire Skills Centre. Collaborative Sixth Form arrangements also exist between the Windsor Boys' and Girls' Schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The mission statement of the Windsor Boys' School to 'build on our traditional strength of the past but with a firm eye to the future' clearly encapsulates the successful journey that this outstanding school has travelled in the last few years. At the heart of this is an unrelenting drive and determination by everyone in the school community to do the best for all boys regardless of their abilities, talents or challenges. This results in the students making outstanding progress both in their academic and personal development and by the time they leave they are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work, with one summing up the many positive comments received by simply writing, 'The school is fantastic, I couldn't ask for more!'

Students enter the school in Year 9 with standards that are in line with those found nationally, although the standards in English for many are lower than those in mathematics and science. They make excellent progress and, by the end of Year 11, the majority reach or exceed the challenging targets set for them. The percentage of boys attaining five or more good GCSE grades is consistently significantly higher than that found nationally. In particular, progress in English is exceptional with a very large number of boys exceeding expectations at GCSE. A small proportion of lower attaining and disaffected boys in the past have failed to gain five or more GCSE passes. However, the school has amended the curriculum and the current students are on target to reach higher standards. Boys continue to make good progress in the sixth form and attain good standards with a very high percentage of students going on to study in higher education, including Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Teaching and learning is highly effective. This is because teachers plan creative and motivating lessons that closely match the needs and interests of the students. However, teaching in the sixth form is at times less stimulating and the pace in lessons can drop because of with an over-reliance on delivering subject content. Good assessment and tracking procedures ensure that students receive the right amount of challenge or support. Directors of learning are alert to any underachievement and rapidly intervene to limit failure. These checks on students' progress do much to promote their success in learning.

The quality of teaching and learning is closely monitored. Lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and a thorough evaluation of test and examination results are used to identify effective practice and what needs to improve. The school is ambitious to continue to lift the standard of all teaching to that of the best and has implemented a number of sound strategies to achieve this, including individual coaching and mentoring from a dedicated team of 'lead practioners'.

The students' excellent academic progress and preparation for later life are supported by their very positive attitudes to learning. Relationships throughout the school community are mature and harmonious, the great majority behave well, and this is reflected in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between students and between staff and students. Most boys thoroughly enjoy school and the exciting range of curriculum activities adds to their enthusiasm for school. Students and parents are extremely appreciative of the school's emphasis on the development of the 'whole person'. However, attendance is only at national expectations despite focused strategies to discourage absence including in-term holidays.

Students say they feel safe, well cared for and are confident that issues such as bullying are addressed promptly. They appreciate and celebrate each other's cultures within the ethos of

the school's motto of 'Uno Animo'. The stable and secure school environment ensures individuals are valued and helped as necessary. Students are unanimous in their support for the recently introduced mixed-year tutor groups. They describe how it has led to improved relationships and support from boys of all ages, and one sixth former considered that a real advantage was the 'unconscious mentoring' of younger students. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are extremely well supported through the arrangements co-ordinated by the inclusion team so they make progress in line with their peers. Drama is used very effectively as a tool to boost confidence and self-esteem. Links with external agencies are well established and students' needs are dealt with swiftly. Procedures to safeguard students, including through employment checks for adults, are secure.

A real strength of the school is the way students' views are actively sought and taken seriously through a variety of formal and informal means. The school is in the process of restructuring the school council and the senior prefect system. This is being done to give students a greater influence in the development of all aspects of the school, including in teaching and learning. Boys make a difference to others' lives through their contributions both within the school and in the wider community. They adopt a hands-on approach to improving the physical conditions environment of others, for example, by raising funds for a school in Kenya.

Since the last inspection, the school has been especially responsive to developing an outstanding curriculum that reflects the needs of all the students. There is a rich diet of courses and this successfully ensures that the vast majority are motivated to succeed and provides excellent pathways into and within the sixth form. In particular the academic curriculum has been adapted to include innovative vocational provision at the off site-skills centre and the Windsor Arts Centre. However, the school is not complacent and continues to investigate ways of further personalising the curriculum. The school now meets all statutory requirements in personal, social and health education, citizenship and enterprise education, although the latter is at an early stage of development. Students are actively encouraged to broaden their horizons through the truly exceptional range of out- of-hours activities. There are a very large number of varied and well supported sports clubs. For example, over 10% of boys are actively involved in the rowing club. There are numerous arts activities and additional academic opportunities such as Latin, and as one student remarked 'It's as cool to be in dance as it is in rugby!'

The school's specialist status in the Arts is at the heart of all its work and it has been creative in its response to national initiatives, community projects and subject development. The many innovative features of the work include a permanent artist in residence and a resident theatre company. The Arts Faculty leads the delivery and support of arts across the curriculum. In addition, it develops teaching and projects in many local schools, including the four local middle schools that are now have associate arts status, and the community.

A key factor in the school's success is its outstanding leadership and management. The inspirational headteacher has used his exceptional talents to build a leadership and middle management team of highly motivated individuals who constantly focus on supporting the development of all students. Excellent teamwork among staff and governors has led to self-evaluation that is well founded and used effectively to raise students' achievement and personal development. The professional development of all staff is given a high priority, with an emphasis on building leadership at all levels in addition to developing teaching. This has included the development of a team of 'lead practioners' working with both staff in the school but also supporting other schools through the RATL and National Support school status.

The school has made very good progress in addressing the issues identified in the last Ofsted inspection however, it is not complacent and actively looks to find ways to make further improvement. The evidence is that it has a strong capacity to achieve this. The school describes its mission statement as being on a journey from 'good to great'. One teacher accurately sums their current position in the words 'I think we are great but really excited about getting better!'

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Sixth form students are exemplary ambassadors for the school and demonstrate maturity, enthusiasm and commitment to their studies, extra-curricular activities and roles in both the school and the wider community.

The students make good progress academically and although standards dipped in 2007 current school tracking data demonstrates that the school has addressed this with the current year group. Lessons are characterised by enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers and engaged learners. Students would welcome the chance to further explore the depth of their subjects and noted that some lessons concentrated too much on content delivery. A key factor behind the effectiveness of the sixth form is the very high quality individual academic support and guidance students receive 'wherever and whenever we need it.' The curriculum on offer to students both in school and beyond is outstanding. Fantastic sporting and artistic opportunities are on offer and enrich the programme of study. The leadership of the sixth form is very well appreciated by the students who think it is 'awesome'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the rate of progress in all sixth form lessons by increasing the percentage of outstanding teaching.

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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?	1	1
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?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	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	3	
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	2	

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	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?	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	1	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, 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

29 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Windsor Boys' School, Windsor, SL4 5EH

Thank you for assisting the inspectors with the recent inspection of your school and for making us feel so welcome during our visit. We very much enjoyed meeting you and valued the discussions we had with you. We hope that you take the time to look at the full report but we thought you would like a summary of our findings.

Our view is that your school provides an outstanding education and that you are right to be very proud of it. The great majority of you enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in the excellent relationships between all members of the school community. We were particularly impressed by the way you care for and support each other, and you told us that this has improved since you moved to a vertical tutoring system. You develop into confident young people, readily take on responsibilities and make a very valuable contribution to the community - you are excellent ambassadors for your school.

You make excellent progress in your learning because you are well taught and provided with very high quality care, guidance and support. Your teachers know you very well and do their best to meet your needs to ensure you achieve as well as you can. The Windsor Boys School aims not only to enable you to fulfil your potential academically but also attaches equal weight to developing your personal and social skills and preparing you for adult life. We feel that your school is highly successful in achieving these aims. A very large proportion of you are involved in team sports, many of which are successful both locally and nationally. At the same time very substantial numbers of you take part in some of the many arts activities open to you. You have many opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school and this is set to improve further with the reorganisation of the student council and the senior prefects.

We were particularly impressed with your headteacher, his senior leadership team, and other leaders, who, together with the governors, have been forward-looking and successfully moved the school from being 'good to great'. In order to continue to improve we have asked the school to ensure that all teaching in the sixth form is as stimulating as that in the lower school and actively engages students in their learning. In addition, many of you mentioned to us that you felt there was a litter problem in the school - I would encourage you all to work as a community in order to stop this problem happening in the first place!

You have a school to be proud of. I wish you all the best for the future and in particular, those of you sitting public examinations, taking part in sporting competitions and those moving on to higher education or employment.

Yours sincerely

Maria Dawes

Her Majesty's Inspector