

# Baylis Court School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110074
<b>Local Authority</b>	Slough
<b>Inspection number</b>	310196
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	797
6th form	81
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jon Reekie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Maureen Ball
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Gloucester Avenue Slough SL1 3AH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01753 531760
<b>Fax number</b>	01753 553719

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how effectively are leaders at all levels ensuring that girls make maximum progress?
- how well does teaching impact on achievement in the core subjects of English and mathematics?
- do students have challenging academic targets that they understand and to which they can aspire?

Evidence was gathered from, analysis of pupils' work, analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with learners and discussions with teachers and senior staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected 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

Baylis Court School is a popular, heavily over-subscribed, smaller than average secondary school. The proportion of girls with learning difficulties is more than twice the national average. The percentage of girls from minority ethnic groups is much higher than average. Two thirds of these speak English as an additional language and many are at the early stages of acquiring the language. An above average proportion are entitled to free school meals. The school gained specialist school status in the Arts in 2007 and has been awarded Investors in People, the Arts Mark Gold, Sports Mark and Healthy School's status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

'Baylis Court is a very caring, nurturing school that notices each individual pupil and provides good teaching in a safe, friendly and fun environment.' This parent's opinion agrees with those of the girls. However, inspection evidence shows that teaching is actually outstanding rather than good which results in the overall excellent achievement of the girls. They enter the school with well below average and sometimes exceptionally low standards and make outstanding progress to reach just above average standards by the end of Year 11. Girls reach particularly high levels of attainment in physical education (PE), art and design, English language and literature, information and communication technology (ICT), health and social care and religious education. The progress the girls make has improved year-on-year. In 2006, girl's achievement was amongst the top 6% of schools nationally and the school's own data show that this is set to improve still further in 2007. Results in national tests this year at the end of Year 9 were the best the school had ever achieved. Baylis Court provides its girls with an outstanding education.

Why do the girls make such good progress? There are a number of factors which impact very well on the achievement they make. One of these is the excellent personal development of the girls. They are extremely happy in school, enjoy themselves thoroughly and behave superbly well. They say this is because, 'Teachers always make lessons fun,' and that they believe that, 'Education is not just based on reading books and solving equations, it is about transforming from young girls into independent young females of the future.' When the inspector asked the girls if there was anything they would change about their school they replied, 'School is improving so much that it's difficult to find anything which could be better'. Attendance is improving thanks to the persistent efforts of the school. Girls adopt healthy lifestyles. They eat healthily and claim that 'the chips were slowly removed without us noticing!' They feel safe and secure and older girls show pride in being mentors to younger ones. There is a highly effective 'school executive team' and a school council who have had a real influence on what goes on in their school. They also act as exemplary role models for other girls. They have changed the uniform, influenced the food on offer in the canteen, made suggestions for new extra-curricular clubs, which are now on offer, and are adopting a buddy school abroad. The girls also involve themselves in many aspects of community life by doing gardening for the elderly, organising Christmas parcels, participating in talent shows, organising multi-cultural events and raising money for charities. The executive run the 'reward shop' for those girls who receive merits for their work. These act as a currency and those who achieve well are able to exchange their merits for items from the shop. Preparation for life after school is thorough. The school works particularly well with local and national businesses who come into school and mentor pupils, help with interviewing techniques and writing applications. Excellent advisory support is provided for careers and girls follow a programme of work experience and Year 11 have 'women at work' career days.

Teaching is excellent because it takes account of the different learning styles of the girls. Interactive whiteboards engage them well in lessons, as seen in mathematics and English, and probing questions make them think. Teachers give girls opportunities to participate in small group discussion and encourage the development of speaking and listening skills through peer assessment and presentations. This practice was observed in drama and English. In both cases it made a considerable impact on progress, particularly of the many girls whose first language is not English. Excellent cross-curricular links are apparent in many lessons, in an outstanding PE session girls learnt about the physics of drag whilst playing team games wearing a parachute!

Meticulous planning and clear lesson objectives are a consistent feature of the work of teachers and they prepare well for the varying needs of the girls in their classes. It is clear to see why standards are rising and pupils achieve so very well.

Why is the personal development of pupils outstanding? The answer lies in the exemplary care, guidance and support provided for them. In the words of a parent, 'We cannot praise the school enough for the support and care our daughter is receiving ...' Assessment and academic guidance are very strong. The tracking system is used efficiently by staff and effectively pin-points those girls in need of extra help. This has had a real impact on raising standards and helping those girls in danger of underachieving to catch up successfully. Girls know and understand their targets. They enthusiastically told the inspector that they had a variety of personal and curricular targets that were challenging and 'drove them on to want to achieve even more'. When asked to explain their targets, girls showed a very clear understanding of why they were set targets and why they were useful to them. On the whole, marking is regularly carried out and girls spoke about their particular appreciation of both the written and verbal feedback they receive from teachers and say it gives clear hints and tips about improving their work. In a small minority of science groups, girls stated, and inspection evidence showed, that marking was patchy and that girls were unaware of whether their work was correct or not.

Because of the excellent curriculum offered by the school, girls benefit from a wide range of subjects, extra-curricular clubs, educational visits and enrichment activities such as 'WOW days', workshops, creative partnership projects and 'curriculum for change' in Year 7. This has offered girls the chance to explore themes such as Japanese culture, slavery and the Holocaust. The school's recent designation as an 'Arts College' is already having an impact on the quality of what the school offers. There are many opportunities to be creative and girls can participate in various art and drama projects. The quality of art work on display around the school is stunning. The curriculum is particularly responsive to the needs of the girls. There is an 'Every Child Matters' timetable for each year group. This has a very good impact on the social and emotional aspects of learning. Girls are taught about living healthily, how to handle difficult situations, citizenship, careers and work related learning, how to learn.

Leaders and managers at all levels work together exceedingly well as a team to make a difference to the lives of their girls. The track record of the headteacher is remarkable. In the last five years she has raised standards from being exceptionally low to being broadly average at GCSE. In some subjects, girls attain high standards, but across the board all groups of pupils achieve well. There have been some challenges in recruiting highly qualified teaching staff, particularly in mathematics and science, but the school has tackled this well and done everything possible to improve the situation. The parents are supportive and praise the school highly for its work. Subject and year group leadership is excellent. The monitoring of teaching, planning and pupil's exercise books is rigorous and results in improvements which lead to higher standards. Governors are challenging and ask questions which help to drive forward improvement, but they also support the school well. Capacity for further improvement is excellent.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The effectiveness and efficiency of sixth form is outstanding because students achieve extremely well considering the starting points of some learners. Results over the last five years demonstrate steady improvement and value added data shows the excellent progress made by many students; this is a direct reflection of the teaching they receive. Dynamic and passionate leadership and management are also having a real impact on achievement and encourage good retention rates.

Recruitment from outside Baylis is also improving because of the growing reputation for excellent care, guidance and support. This is provided through an outstanding tutorial system which is built on respect and is 'a two-way street between staff and students'. Although the sixth form at Baylis is small, consortium arrangements give students access to a broad curriculum and a wide variety of academic and vocational courses. This means that they are catered for exceptionally well and each and every one of them is given the opportunity to excel. Personal development and well-being is enhanced by outstanding partnership links with multi-national companies whose senior managers put in time to give all university applicants 'dummy interviews', and for those venturing into the world of work, they are helped with CVs and job applications. Students praise the school highly and say that the teachers are very friendly and approachable and are always there to help. This results in mature young people who are delighted to act as role models and mentors to younger pupils. Students make a significant contribution to the school through the 'executive team' who have close relationships with school leaders. They have had considerable influence on the decision making process in the school and have a much deserved reputation for motivating and encouraging others to new heights of achievement.

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

- Ensure that exercise books are marked regularly by all departments.

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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	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	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 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	1	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	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

<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	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**

23 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Baylis Court School, Slough, SL1 3AH

Thank you very much for making me so welcome during my visit to your school this week. I was impressed by how polite and courteous you all were and how pro-active you all are in the life of your school. You spoke to me about how you have a strong voice in school and how you help to get things done. This is highly commendable! I was particularly interested in your 'Reward Shop', particularly in what could be bought with your merits! This is a really great idea.

You will be pleased to know that I have graded your school as outstanding because of how well you all achieve. Your teachers work hard to prepare interesting lessons. I really enjoyed watching you in your PE lesson, I've never seen team games whilst wearing a parachute before! You looked like you enjoyed yourselves. Your headteacher and her leadership team do a great job and want you all to do as well as you possibly can.

Even in an excellent school like yours, there are always things to be improved upon and I have asked your headteacher to ensure that your books are always marked up to date in all your subjects.

Once again, thank you for a super day and I wish you all well in the future at Baylis Court.

Kind regards

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector