

Bournemouth School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113905
Local Authority	Bournemouth
Inspection number	311425
Inspection date	17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Wiola Hola HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	1083
6th form	274
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Noel Spreadbury
Headteacher	Alistair Brien
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	Castle Gate Close Castle Lane West Bournemouth BH8 9UJ
Telephone number	01202 526289
Fax number	01202 548923

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, particularly in English and in the sixth form; the impact of specialist status; and the impact of leadership and management on standards, looking closely at systems for self-review, academic guidance and safeguarding. Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation form and other review documents; nationally published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; observation of the school at work in lessons and at break times; discussions with staff, students and four members of the governing body; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. Inspectors 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

Attainment on entry is well above average in this large selective school for girls. Most students are White British. Others are from a wide range of backgrounds but no students are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very low. The school has specialist status in humanities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. The staff, led by an experienced, effective, and much trusted and respected headteacher and senior leadership team, work constantly to improve educational provision and outcomes even further. Staff and students work and learn with tremendous clarity of purpose and superb relationships, showing no complacency, and striving for excellence.

Students achieve well to reach exceptionally high overall standards in GCSE and A-level examinations, but achievement does vary across subjects and lessons in keeping with the quality of teaching. In the 2007 GCSE examinations, students achieved particularly well in design and technology, French, history, mathematics, religious studies, science and Spanish. Achievement in English, whilst satisfactory, is not generally as high as in the other two core subjects of mathematics and science, where it is good. The 2007 GCSE results dipped because not as many students reached A and A* grades as expected.

One of the most notable strengths of the school is in students' outstanding personal development and well-being. Parents recognise and appreciate the school's efforts to provide so well for their daughters, academically and personally. This comment from one is typical of many: 'She is positively thriving in a caring and stimulating environment.' Students are exceptionally well prepared to meet each future stage, in the advice they receive and in the personal support provided by staff and through peers. Students speak highly of the house system that affords them many opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility. Students enjoy school greatly. Their behaviour is excellent and attendance well above average. They are articulate and express their views candidly, with courtesy and consideration, whether in praise of the school or otherwise. They seek constantly to encourage each other, in their own or other year groups. Younger girls cite examples of how older ones have helped them. Students develop an extremely good understanding of how to adopt safe and healthy lifestyles. The academic guidance they receive is good: targets are set and reviewed regularly. Students are often very clear about what they can do to improve their work, but as with the quality of teaching, there is some inconsistency across lessons and subjects.

Teaching and learning are good. Some lessons are excellent and in these, teachers' passion for their subjects, and highly interesting and motivating activities, inspire students to learn exceptionally well. Sometimes, the extent of students' enjoyment of learning is far less because pace is undemanding or teaching methods do not require students to think enough for themselves; in such lessons, teachers make limited use of questioning to draw out students' ideas or understanding. Senior leaders have a full and accurate understanding of the quality of lessons in the school and are clear about where strengths lie and what needs to be improved. The curriculum is outstanding because it meets so well the needs of the students, who have high aspirations about their future education and careers. It is enriched extremely well, not only through the vast range of extra-curricular clubs and activities but also by many educational trips and visits. Such enrichment, together with the personal, social and health education programme, contributes enormously to students' excellent personal development. The school's specialist status in humanities has made a tangible impact on the overall quality of provision. Provision for sport and physical education is good overall, although some students regret that a GCSE course is not offered in this area; it is offered at A level. Whilst some parts of the school are cramped and showing signs of age, particularly in art, science, physical education and design and technology, the new areas such as the performing arts centre have provided exciting and

much enjoyed added dimensions to learning. The school works very effectively to support those students who find some aspects of learning difficult.

Leadership and management are good overall. Governance is excellent because governors are extremely knowledgeable about the school's work and effectiveness, support and challenge leaders well, and work resolutely on improving provision and outcomes. At all levels of management, an extremely clear direction has been set for the school's future. Staff are buoyant, parents highly supportive and students enthusiastic. The school's systems for self-evaluation are good and the departmental reviews conducted by middle managers show rigour in most respects: some do not deal thoroughly enough with evaluating students' progress. The school's capacity for improvement is good and can be seen, for example, in the improvements in accommodation and in information and communication technology since the last inspection. It is also visible in the rising overall trend in examination results. Results in 2008 are expected to rise again after the dip in 2007. The senior team and the governors are rightly seeking to review roles as the current leadership structure places a high demand on a relatively small team in this large school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The strengths of the main school exist in equal measure in this good and well led and managed sixth form. Most students from the main school stay on into the sixth form to take advanced level courses. They are joined by students from other schools in the local area. Retention on courses is exceptionally high. Virtually all students go on to higher education. An outstanding curriculum, in terms of the range of subjects offered and in the enrichment activities available, enables students to develop well academically and exceptionally well personally. Some collaboration exists with the nearby boys' grammar school that extends even further the range of subjects offered. Teaching and learning are good and lead to students' good achievement overall. Examination results are generally well above average but students' progress varies considerably between subjects, showing a broadly similar variation to that in the main school, with drama as a particular strength. A strong feature, highly valued by students, is in the high quality guidance they receive when making important choices at key points in their lives at school and for the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement, particularly for the most able students, by ensuring that all lessons are consistently paced and involve high-order questioning techniques to probe and develop students' understanding; and share existing good practice in these areas of teaching.
- Ensure that middle managers develop further their role in evaluating students' progress.
- Ensure that students understand consistently how to move their work on to the next grade or level.

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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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ 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	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	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

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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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

20 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Bournemouth School for Girls, Bournemouth BH8 9UJ

Thank you for your welcome when I visited the school with another inspector. We much appreciated the conversations we had with you. I write to let you know that we found your school to be a good one. Some aspects of it are outstanding.

The school enables you to achieve well in your academic work. Examination results are well above average in the main school and in the sixth form. Your personal development is outstanding and visible in the care, courtesy and consideration you show around the school and in the wider community. The house system offers you many opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility. Younger students told us how much they value the help of older ones. Many of your parents wrote in praise of the school for providing such a valuable range of educational experiences. The curriculum is indeed outstanding, as is the care, guidance and support you receive. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive and you appreciate this.

Most lessons are good and some are excellent. You clearly enjoy school greatly, particularly lessons where teaching shows passion and provides interesting and challenging tasks. In some lessons, learning is less enjoyable or productive because the pace is slow or because the teacher does not pose questions to probe your understanding or encourage you to think deeply.

The school is well led and managed and benefits from an excellent governing body. Governors hold your headteacher and other staff in high regard, as do your parents, because their work is effective in raising standards and improving the school further. Specialist status in humanities is enhancing your learning in many ways.

- We have asked the school to do three main things in order to increase your overall rate of progress:
- make sure lessons consistently challenge all of you, particularly through questioning that checks your understanding and really makes you think
- improve the way staff evaluate your progress
- help you to always understand exactly how to move your work onto the next grade or level; we encourage you to ask if you are not sure how to do this.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Wiola Hala Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B

20 April 2008



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Wiola Hola
Her Majesty's Inspector