

Katharine Lady Berkeley's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115757
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	312057
Inspection date	16 January 2008
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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1505
6th form	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Clarke
Headteacher	Andrew Harris
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Kingswood Road Wotton-under-Edge GL12 8RB
Telephone number	01453 842227
Fax number	01453 845480

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and an Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: personal development and well-being; the sixth form; assessment, tracking and target setting. They gathered evidence from: discussions with staff, pupils and a representative of the governing body; observing lessons, tutor periods, an assembly and the running of the school; examining appropriate documentation; and gathering the views of parents from questionnaires and telephone calls. 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, 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 larger than average. It has Healthy Schools status and the Artsmark Gold award. The school has been designated a High Performing Specialist School. Its first specialism is in languages and its second is as a Training School. The school has International Schools status and is an Investor in People.

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 in which the sixth form is outstanding. Strong provision in all areas is underpinned by the outstanding quality of personal development and well-being. This ensures that the achievement of the pupils is good in the main school and excellent in the sixth form.

Pupils enter the school with standards that are above average. Although there has been some variation over time, particularly in English, standards at the end of Year 9 in the national tests are consistently high and the pupils make good progress in their learning. The proportion achieving five GCSE passes including English and mathematics in 2007 was above average at 70%, showing that achievement is firmly based on a good grounding in essential skills for life. All groups of pupils throughout the school make at least satisfactory progress and the majority make good progress in their learning. In the sixth form, rising standards are exceptionally high and the achievement of the pupils is excellent.

The high standards and good achievement in the school overall are sustained by the quality of teaching and learning, which is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Lessons are briskly paced. The pupils respond well to the degree of challenge and high expectations, which are matched by a good level of support when needed. Teachers establish a good rapport with pupils, which improves their motivation and engagement. Tasks are well suited to the pupils' abilities, and activities are varied and flexible. A clear focus on reflecting about the quality of their work enables pupils to develop more effectively as independent learners. The subject knowledge of the teachers is good. The school monitors the quality of teaching and learning thoroughly, so that it knows its strengths and areas for development well. It is well placed to develop its recent designation as a specialist training school.

The curriculum is well matched to the needs and interests of the pupils throughout the school. It meets statutory requirements and is flexible and responsive to their needs. Specialist status has a positive impact on provision, with all pupils having the opportunity to study a modern foreign language. A range of languages is offered in the school, including French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and Latin. The curriculum is responsive to local needs and provision, with a high proportion of pupils choosing to study technology subjects. It is enhanced by an excellent range of activities linked to sport, the arts and the specialism in modern foreign languages, with established exchanges and expeditions.

Pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being make an excellent contribution to their good achievement. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Strong classroom management and a consistent approach to rewards and sanctions ensure lessons are rarely disrupted, which has a positive impact on standards. Pupils have very positive views of the school, reflected in comments such as, 'People accept who you are here' and 'It was really comforting moving in'. They feel safe in school. Because of recent initiatives, they are very secure in feeling that they have someone to turn to if they have any problems. This includes counselling from trained sixth form students in the 'Talk in Confidence' group. Pupils are very appreciative of the efforts made by teachers during lessons and in the excellent range of out of school activities to improve their experience of school. One pupil commented, 'Teachers go to great lengths for us.' Their enjoyment of school is also shown by good attendance figures and by their desire to achieve well, not just academically but through becoming mature individuals who are given a good grounding to enter the next phase of their lives. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives through eating well and taking advantage

of the many sporting opportunities. The uptake of food from the canteen has increased since it became healthier. They have a great sense of community. Through the school council they have achieved many improvements to the school environment. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although the spiritual element is satisfactory. Opportunities for reflection in assembly and tutor group time are not always taken up. The daily tutor period is not consistently used to best effect in terms of ensuring that there are activities that are clearly focused on engaging the pupils in improving their academic and personal development. Pupils' cultural development is exemplary due to the many overseas exchanges, educational trips and musical productions.

Care, guidance and support for the pupils are good. Excellent pastoral support and guidance underpin the pupils' outstanding personal development and are often tailor-made, using outside agencies as well as the school's highly effective inclusion unit. This has led to several pupils who would otherwise not have been able to continue with their education being supported in school. Pupils recognise the extent to which support has improved for them all, especially in relation to having someone to turn to. 'In the past year so much has been done to help people,' was one typical pupil's comment. The academic support and guidance that pupils receive is good. The recent introduction of more regular reporting and mentoring, with precise information about achievements and how to improve standards, is greatly appreciated by pupils and parents. Pupils understand the new 'base' and 'stretch' targets and feel these are becoming effective in improving their achievement. These new initiatives are linked to assessment procedures which are more focused on developing skills and in creating common ground between subjects. However, some inconsistencies persist between departments in the quality of assessment and advice about how to improve work.

Leadership and management are good. Recent restructuring has made responsibilities clearer and has contributed to ensuring that monitoring and evaluation are rigorous, accurate and closely linked to good strategic planning. The school's specialist status is well managed, so that it pervades the work of the school effectively, enhancing the curriculum, personal development and the quality of teaching and learning. The use of challenging targets for standards, specialist status and other aspects of the school, such as attendance, inform planning well and help the school to remain focused on its priorities. Excellent financial management contributes to good value for money in the main school and outstanding value in the sixth form. The governing body is active, committed and well organised. Regular links with departments enable the governing body to understand the work of the school. Its work is carefully aligned with the school's own processes for evaluation and planning, allowing it to give good challenge and support. The capacity to improve is good.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Standards are exceptionally high and achievement is outstanding in the sixth form. Induction arrangements are excellent, ensuring that students are placed on appropriate courses and that their initial experience of sixth form studies lays a solid foundation for their future success. The excellent quality of teaching and learning is underpinned by outstanding care, guidance and support, which ensures that students have a very clear grasp of their achievements and how they can improve their standards. Students respond very well to the wide range of advanced level courses on offer and to other courses, such as those in modern languages, which they all follow. However, the school is right to consider, in collaboration with other local providers, whether to broaden the range of vocational options available and so enable more students to

attend their local school in the sixth form. Retention in the sixth form is excellent, with nearly all students completing their studies. The students' enjoyment of their experience and confidence in the provision are reflected in their good attendance. Advice and support throughout the sixth form, and in helping students to make choices and successful applications for their future, are outstanding and warmly appreciated by the students. The sixth form is a distinctive part of the school, playing an outstanding role in setting an example to younger pupils and providing them with support through helping with reading, supporting pupils in subjects, providing counselling and advice, and organising events for charity. The school's outstanding leadership and management of the sixth form ensure that the academic and personal development of the students are excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment arrangements and the quality of advice about how to improve work are consistently good in all subjects.
- Improve the use of tutor periods so that they are more focused on the academic and personal development of the pupils.

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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	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	2	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
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	2	
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	1
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	2	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	2	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

17 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Katharine Lady Berkeley's School, Wotton under Edge, GL12 8RB

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave us when we recently inspected your school. Your willingness to share your views with us and the perceptive comments that you made were a great help to us.

Your school is good with many strong features. Personal development and well-being are outstanding and this ensures that you develop well as people, as well as doing well in your examinations. You have plenty of opportunities, which many of you take up, to participate in sport, the arts and in activities linked to the school's specialism in languages. Your school council is having an impact and represents your views well. Pupils in your school reach high standards in their subjects, making good progress whatever their background or past achievements. This is because teaching and learning are good, the curriculum is tailored to your needs, and the school makes sure that you get good advice and support. The sixth form in your school is outstanding, with high and rising standards and excellent teaching, advice and care.

We agreed with you that the new arrangements for reports and for setting targets for your improvement are good. We have asked the school to improve two areas of its work. We want the school to ensure that the quality of assessment and advice is consistently good in all subjects and to make sure that tutor periods are fully used to improve your academic and personal development.

Thank you for your welcome and contribution.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Harrett HMI



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