

# Sheldon School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126499
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	315574
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Russell HMI

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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1726
6th form	331
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeremy Hilton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gerard MacMahon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 March 2005
<b>School address</b>	Hardenhuish Lane Chippenham SN14 6HJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01249 766020
<b>Fax number</b>	01249 766030

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form; aspects of students' personal development and well-being; aspects of the curriculum; school self-evaluation and planning; and aspects of care, guidance and support (particularly provision for students with English as an additional language). Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons; discussions with students and leaders; parents' views; and an analysis of data and other written evidence. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the 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

This large school is one of three serving the town of Chippenham and its surrounding area. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Levels of social and economic deprivation are below average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average. The school was designated as a specialist science college in 2002 and was awarded specialist sports college status in 2007.

## 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. When it was inspected three years ago, it was judged to be very good with many outstanding features. It has improved significantly since then. Parents recognise and appreciate the school's quality and the very large majority of responses to the inspection questionnaire were very positive. One parent's comment was typical of many: 'We have always found Sheldon to be an excellent school, well led and run by excellent staff who are always well informed about the children they are teaching.'

The school's continuing improvement is as a result of highly effective leadership and management at all levels. The headteacher and other senior staff set a strong and clear direction. They have a highly accurate picture of the school's significant strengths, but are not complacent. Given the size of the school, they rightly recognise the importance of strong middle leadership. Middle leaders have a key role in monitoring and developing the quality of provision in their areas. Procedures for supporting them in this role are extensive. As a result, middle leaders are highly effective and able to support strong, consistent outcomes across the school. The school's systems for planning are detailed and robust. They ensure that developments are sharply focused and well coordinated. Many of the targets for measuring improvement identified in plans are sharp and precise, although some lack this degree of precision. Leaders have made extensive use of the school's specialist status to develop provision and improve outcomes.

The school has a strongly positive ethos. Students' behaviour, attitudes and relationships with teachers are excellent. They feel very safe in school and confirm that bullying is rare and dealt with well. Levels of attendance are significantly above national averages. Students have many opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community. These include a well-developed prefect system and school council. Students are able to lead school developments, for example redesigning outside areas and developing the new bullying charter. Many opportunities to take on leadership roles with younger students also arise from the school's work as a specialist science and sports college. Students' well-developed literacy, numeracy and personal skills make a very strong contribution to their future employability and economic well-being. Opportunities for work-related learning are good, although there is scope for further development in this area. The wide range of extra-curricular sporting opportunities and the high quality of food in the canteen make a strong contribution to students' ability to live healthily.

The standard of teaching is consistently high. The very large majority of lessons are good or better and a significant number are outstanding. As a result, students are enthusiastic and enjoy learning. Lessons are well structured, varied and interesting, and excellent relationships help to create a very positive learning environment. The quality of class discussion is high. A particular strength of the school's outstanding curriculum is the extremely wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. These opportunities are very popular with students. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is good. It provides some opportunities for students to study vocational courses and to personalise the curriculum to match their specific needs and interests. However, these opportunities are currently rather limited and the school is now beginning to increase them.

A particular strength of the excellent care, guidance and support provided is the way in which the school supports the transition into Year 7. This helps students to move easily into a large secondary school. Strong behaviour management systems help to maintain very high standards

of behaviour; the exclusion rate is low and significant lesson disruption is rare. Students are clear about their academic targets and know what they need to do to meet them. Tutors meet with students each term to discuss and review their progress. Students appreciate these opportunities and say that they help them to make further progress in their learning. In recent years, the number of students joining the school with English as an additional language has increased significantly. The school has responded very quickly and effectively to this new challenge and provision for these students is very strong.

This high quality provision helps students to make rapid progress. Students enter the school with standards that are close to the national average. Key Stage 3 standards and achievement have risen considerably in recent years and students now make outstanding progress. In 2007, national test results were well above average and achievement was very high in English, mathematics and science. Students make good progress at Key Stage 4. Standards are consistently significantly above national averages. Standards in English and mathematics are very high and the proportion of students attaining five or more higher grades at GCSE including these subjects is well above the national average. Although GCSE results in 2007 were similar to those in 2006, students taking examinations in 2007 entered the school with higher standards. As a result, although still good, these students made slightly less progress during their time in school. A range of evidence, including the school's tracking and achievement in examinations already taken, clearly indicates that students currently in Year 11 are making greater progress. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve very well because of the excellent support they receive.

Much has been achieved in the three years since the last inspection. The school has focused sharply on the areas identified for improvement and these have improved rapidly. Key Stage 3 achievement has risen considerably. Robust systems are in place to identify further areas for improvement and the school is very well placed to continue its development and maintain its strong performance.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The school has an outstanding sixth form. The sixth form has doubled in size in recent years and a high proportion of students now stay on. This rapid development has been very well led and the increase in size has been achieved without a dip in the high quality of provision.

The sixth form curriculum is broad and includes a wide range of choices, many offered in partnership with a neighbouring school. As in the rest of the school, the quality of sixth form teaching is very high. Sixth form students are very well supported and their attitudes to learning are excellent. They make outstanding progress and attain well above average standards.

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

- Develop greater flexibility in the Key Stage 4 curriculum to ensure that it meets students' individual needs and aspirations closely.

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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	1	1
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	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	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**

28 March 2008

Dear students

Inspection of Sheldon School, Chippenham, SN14 6HJ

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings. We judged all areas of the school's work to be outstanding.

We were impressed by your school. The atmosphere is very pleasant and we found students to be friendly, mature and very well behaved. You are very well cared for and relationships between staff and students are excellent. You told us how safe and happy you feel in school. You also told us about the superb range of clubs and after school activities.

Lessons are consistently very good. This helps you to make rapid progress and to achieve high results. Students make the best progress at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Students make good progress at Key Stage 4. We have asked the school to continue developing the Key Stage 4 curriculum to ensure that it matches your needs and interests as closely as possible, enabling you to make even greater progress.

The school's leaders are doing an excellent job. This has enabled the school to develop very well in the three years since the last inspection. Although the school is already outstanding, staff are ambitious to make the school even better in the future.

Yours faithfully

Chris Russell Her Majesty's Inspector