



High School for Girls

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 115718
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290314
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Gloria Dolan HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Denmark Road
School category	Community		Gloucester
Age range of pupils	11–18		GL1 3JN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01452 543335
Number on roll (school)	616	Fax number	01452 549862
Number on roll (6th form)	206		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Steve Martin
		Headteacher	Malcolm Willis
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	20–21 September 2006	290314

Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The High School for Girls is heavily oversubscribed. Boys are admitted into the sixth form, where they make up around 10% of pupils. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds at the school is higher than in the local population. Just over 4% of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is very small.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

High School for Girls is an outstanding school. Pupils enter the school with high levels of prior attainment. By the time they finish Year 11, pupils' attainment is very high and they make better-than-expected progress at each key stage. In the sixth form, pass rates and the proportion of A and B grades at A-level are outstanding. Overall, pupils' achievement is outstanding.

Pupils have a broad education and take a high number of GCSEs. The extensive range of enrichment activities greatly enhances their development and enjoyment of school and of working in the wider community. There is high take-up of extra-curricular activities and attendance rates at school are also high. Study skills and life skills are developed effectively. Pupils are articulate and well-rounded individuals as a result of the many opportunities available to them. Extra academic support is readily available at lunchtimes and many pupils take advantage of this provision. The library is open for extended hours beyond the school day. Healthy eating is promoted effectively in lessons and the school refectory and pupils eat healthily in school.

Pupils develop mature and responsible attitudes quickly and make a positive contribution to the community. Their intolerance of bullying and their contribution towards creating a very harmonious and happy environment are the result of the excellent, supportive culture embedded at school. This culture clearly demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. Transition into the school is managed carefully and the formation of friendship groups is facilitated well. Sixth form students act as buddies and hold weekly chat sessions to discuss and allay any anxieties felt by new pupils in Year 7. Pastoral support is outstanding throughout the school and there are effective arrangements and partnerships to support pupils' well-being. Child protection measures are robust.

The high standard of teaching ensures that almost all lessons have very good pace and challenge and pupils make productive use of their time. Pupils work safely in lessons and have good awareness of conducting themselves outside lessons in a safe manner. Pupils are attentive and make good contributions to discussions and group work. They provide thoughtful responses and are confident to ask questions freely, in order to clarify their understanding of particular topics. Very good use is made of interactive whiteboards in many lessons, including, for example, animated models which bring complex theory to life. Pupils make very good progress in most lessons but there is further scope for lessons to be more closely matched to the needs of individual pupils, particularly in the sixth form. Pupils' development of skills useful to career development after school, such as speaking and writing clearly, being well organised and reliable is exceptionally good.

Well-focused comments on marked work help pupils to improve their performance.

The key to the school's success is the outstanding quality of leadership and management at all levels. The senior leadership sets high expectations of academic success and of valuing and caring for the individual. Managers at all levels work towards these common goals. Governors contribute a range of skills, regularly monitor the

school's performance and act as critical friends. Teaching is monitored rigorously and strengths and weaknesses are identified accurately. Self-evaluation, whilst generally good, requires sharper focus to identify the reasons for all conclusions drawn. All key areas for development from the last inspection have been successfully tackled and the school has grown in size, diversity of curriculum and the quality of its provision. Its capacity to improve is outstanding. The school is held in very high regard by the community. The school's specialist status in languages is of great benefit to pupils in all year groups and has contributed towards High School for Girls being an outstanding school.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. Students are attentive in lessons and highly motivated to develop well. Students make good progress and pass rates are very high at both AS- and A-level. The proportion of top grades is consistently very high. Pastoral support and careers guidance are exceptionally good. Students are articulate and confident and readily ask questions for clarification in lessons. Teachers help pupils to analyse lesson topics critically but lessons are not always adapted sufficiently well to best meet the needs of every pupil. Students participate enthusiastically in an extensive range of enrichment activities, including many cultural and charitable events.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maximise the achievement of learners by ensuring a consistent match of work to their individual needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils reach very high standards and their achievement is outstanding. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with high levels of prior attainment. The school sets challenging targets for pupils and builds effectively on their high level of ability. Pupils make significantly better progress than expected at Key Stage 3.

Progress is consistently high in mathematics and science, and better than expected in English. Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 shows a strong picture in all core subjects and one which has been very much higher than the national average over the last five years.

Pupils take a higher number of GCSEs than normal and attainment rates are very high. Approximately 99% of pupils pass five GCSEs graded A* to C each year, including English and mathematics. The proportion of A* and A grades was significantly higher than the national average in the large majority of subjects in 2005. In 2006 the proportion of A* and A grades remained very high in most subjects. Overall, pupils

make excellent progress at Key Stage 4. Progress is better than expected for all pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Progress in mathematics is consistently significantly higher than expected.

In the sixth form, retention rates are very high and pass rates at AS- and A-level are much higher than the national average. Students make good progress but there is scope to improve the performance of a minority of students even more. The A-level pass rate was very high at 98.8% in 2006. The proportion of A and B grades awarded is very much higher than the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. It contributes greatly to their achievement. Pupils are a joy to teach. They enjoy lessons, to which they contribute eagerly and confidently. Pupils learn independently and respect and listen to each other. They feel confident and secure, and this is reflected in the excellent behaviour and relationships which are a notable strength of the school. Attendance is well above average, reflecting pupils' keenness to learn. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. A developed spiritual and moral awareness is very evident, for example, in the work in religious studies on complex topics such as the function of religion. Pupils eagerly join in charity initiatives, work experience and community service and take responsibility as form representatives. Sixth form students counsel younger students at school and help pupils from another school with developing skills for studying and personal organisation. Safe practices in lessons and personal safety have prominence and pupils have good awareness of safety issues. Pupils enthuse about the fact that they can 'make friends in different year groups.' Pupils act positively as a result of the efforts to promote healthy living and the well-organised programme for personal, moral, social and citizenship education. The school successfully develops basic skills such as the ability to talk clearly and articulately, preparing pupils well for life beyond school. However, the school goes far beyond this in enabling pupils to flourish as mature individuals with a zest for life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding in the main school and good in the sixth form.

Pupils in the school benefit from teaching that is always at least satisfactory and mostly good or outstanding. Most lessons have a good, challenging pace and make full use of resources such as interactive whiteboards. Most teachers make good use of

assessment procedures to set pupils challenging targets and to identify any difficulties that they are having. Whilst the school has some outstanding procedures and opportunities available to pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented, the work is not always matched to every student's ability. This is particularly apparent in the sixth form where the progress of some pupils, although good, is less than that of others. In all lessons the outstanding attitudes and behaviour of pupils make a positive contribution to the learning environment.

Pupils are well motivated and participate fully in lessons. This ensures that they generally make outstanding progress as a result of good or outstanding teaching. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support specific pupils and the use of mentors to support underachieving pupils is very good.

All pupils are involved in target setting and are aware of Key Stage 3 target levels and target grades for GCSE and A-level subjects. Work is regularly marked with meaningful comments, ensuring pupils know how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum provision is outstanding. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The school is selective in its intake and both parents and pupils choose the school for its academic provision. As a specialist language school there are outstanding opportunities for pupils in many foreign languages. Options available to the older pupils and those in the sixth form fully meet the needs and aspirations of pupils. Most pupils in the main school continue into further education but they all receive good careers advice and are made aware of vocational courses available to them. The school is actively working with other local schools to increase the availability of vocational courses for pupils through consortium arrangements.

The curriculum makes very good provision for the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. Provision for work-related learning and enterprise is satisfactory, whilst the provision for personal, health, social and citizenship education are very good and makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development. A wide range of music, drama, sport activities and subject clubs is offered during lunch times and after school and there is a very high participation rate by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils value the excellent care, guidance and support that nurtures them throughout their time in school and contributes significantly to their excellent personal development and strong academic achievement. Pupils comment enthusiastically on their confidence in getting support from both adults and fellow pupils. There are robust child protection

procedures. Pupils' work is marked constructively and regularly. They value the thoroughness of the monitoring and mentoring, and the way in which both they and their parents are involved in their learning. Target setting and reports effectively help pupils to improve their work. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities get high quality support and achieve as well as other pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are also very well supported, although they are not always given sufficiently challenging work in lessons. The school's guidance helps pupils settle well into school, and to make appropriate option and career choices later on. The careers programme is enmeshed in the curriculum and is evaluated carefully by pupils as well as the providers. The school highly values the support of the Pupil and Family Support Worker. Sixth formers especially value the personal mentoring they all receive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding in the main school and in the sixth form.

The school's acting headteacher, in place for one term, was formerly one of the senior managers. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. There is good understanding of the school's main strengths and areas for improvement at all levels of school leadership. School managers share a common sense of purpose in providing a motivating, high-achieving and happy school community that is clearly directed to pupils' progress and rounded development. Self-evaluation considers a wide range of evidence but there is sometimes insufficient clarity in the analysis when conclusions are drawn. All of the key areas for development identified at the last inspection have been tackled successfully and the school has outstanding capacity to improve. Teaching and learning are evaluated rigorously and effectively on a regular basis. The monitoring of pupils' progress and the usefulness of feedback on marked work is closely checked on a frequent basis in each department.

The work of the governing body is outstanding. Governors give detailed consideration to many aspects of the school's performance and working arrangements and strike a good balance between providing school managers with support and challenge. Links between individual governors and specific aspects of the school's provision help to ensure governors contribute from an informed base.

The school has a strong ethos of promoting achievement, caring for the individual, and safeguarding pupils. It meets its responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Equality of opportunity is highly valued and promoted positively. A happy and harmonious environment exists in which pupils thrive. The development of the school as a specialist language college has been a great success and pupils benefit significantly from the additional resources and opportunities it has brought.

Resources are used effectively and efficiently. Rigorous financial management provides an excellent foundation for sustained strategic development. The school is outstanding in its work with a range of local partnerships, through which it contributes to much sharing of good practice.

The school's reputation in the community is excellent. The overwhelming majority of parents are very happy with the school. A very small minority would like better communication with parents.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
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	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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?	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.

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	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed observing your lessons and were pleased to have the chance to speak with some of you and to view examples of your work. We are writing to tell you what we found when we inspected your school.

We are pleased to report that High School for Girls is an outstanding school. You are being very well taught and your teachers care deeply that you make the most progress you can during your school career. Past pupils have achieved very high grades in national tests and public examinations and the inspectors feel confident that, with continued hard work, you will too.

All the inspectors have been particularly impressed by how well you conduct yourselves in lessons and towards each other around the school. One pupil summed up the caring atmosphere to us by saying, 'even if we don't really like someone, we can still say "Hi" to them'. You assured us that there was no bullying at school, which is to everyone's great credit. Your parents and carers told us that you are happy at school, feel safe and are well cared for. We agree, and the way the teachers and support staff at school guide you and help you develop into confident and responsible adults is outstanding.

The leadership and management at your school are outstanding. The headteacher and other staff make sure that you have a very wide range of learning opportunities and extra-curricular activities available to you.

We have asked your teachers to plan their lessons so that each individual in the class is able to learn to the very best of their ability, to help you to achieve your full potential. Thank you for your contribution to this inspection and to making High School for Girls an outstanding school.