

Gordano School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	131374
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	397493
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2012
Lead inspector	Bill Stoneham

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1961
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adele Haysom
Headteacher	Gary Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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Introduction

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham	Additional inspector
Ian Bryant	Additional inspector
Sheila Crew	Additional inspector
Marion Hobbs	Additional inspector
Louise Sharples	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Sixty-four lessons were observed, featuring 64 different teachers. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, students, the headteacher, senior and middle managers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at students' work. In addition, questionnaire responses from 181 parents and carers, 77 staff and 154 students were analysed and their views taken into account.

Information about the school

Gordano School is a far larger-than-average school. Most students are from a White British background, although there are a few from a range of minority ethnic groups. Fewer pupils than average speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average, although the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than usual. The school meets the current floor standard which determines the minimum standard set by the government. It has specialist technology status and holds a large number of awards for its provision.

The school has recently converted to academy status. At the time of the inspection, extensive building work was being undertaken to provide additional sixth-form facilities.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. Students benefit from an outstanding education based on an extensive and innovative curriculum. They benefit from numerous opportunities to excel and considerable scope to exercise responsibility and leadership.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students make outstanding progress gaining very strong examination results because the excellent and varied curriculum meets their needs so well. Teaching is outstanding and demanding, as is leadership and management. Students thrive in the highly supportive environment.
- Achievement overall is outstanding. All groups, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, make rapid progress in relation to their starting points and abilities. Above-average attendance contributes to this level of progress.
- Teaching is outstanding. Many lessons are characterised by stimulating pace and challenge, and high expectations. Students respond earnestly and with great interest and enthusiasm. In a few lessons, there are inconsistencies in the promotion of literacy and numeracy, and staff do not consistently allow sufficient time for plenary sessions where students can properly showcase their learning.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Although a small minority of parents, carers and students expressed reservations about behaviour, students' excellent attitudes make a significant contribution to their learning in a very happy, safe and harmonious environment.
- The school is led by an outstanding and visionary headteacher. He is well supported by excellent senior and middle leaders, and a highly committed and skilful team of staff. The highly professional and knowledgeable governing body offers outstanding support. Self-evaluation is accurate; the school knows its strengths and continually strives to improve further through a robust staff performance system. The curriculum is vibrant, varied and innovative and the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is

outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that even more lessons are outstanding by achieving greater consistency:
 - in the promotion of literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects
 - in the use of final plenary sessions so that students have ample opportunity to reflect on and explain their learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are variable but broadly above average for their age. Achievement, including that of sixth formers, disabled students, those who have special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, is outstanding. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average and in a range of subjects they are high.

The school's extensive monitoring and tracking systems and evidence from classroom observations confirms that standards are at least being maintained and in some areas, such as mathematics, are being further improved. The outstanding curriculum makes a very strong impact on students' learning, ensuring that all the different groups are catered for effectively. 'Master classes' and challenge days ensure that more able students are fully extended. Lower-attaining students in Years 7 and 8 improve their work significantly through a programme called 'Boost'.

During the inspection, students in all years made outstanding progress in many lessons covering a diverse range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, history, music and health and social care. A typical example was an excellent Year 8 drama lesson in which all students made rapid progress in their learning because of the teacher's expert subject knowledge allied to her infectious and enthusiastic approach. Students learnt by attempting a sequence of skilfully planned activities and by the emphasis placed on the use of subject-specific literacy when assessing their work. A focus on using appropriate language accurately and in context was a key feature of an outstanding Year 13 history lesson on Nazi Germany. The students were challenged to review various sources and offer detailed analysis ensuring correct references were made to features such as 'despotic tyranny', 'autarky' and 'dictatorship'. The lesson proceeded at an impressive pace with all students contributing and showing sophisticated levels of understanding and knowledge.

Occasionally progress slows when students are not given enough opportunities to reflect on their learning. Ninety-seven per cent of parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaire agreed that progress is at least good.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is outstanding. This includes in the sixth form and the teaching of disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Lessons are invariably planned extremely well to maximise learning. This has led directly to students' outstanding achievement. The school's own detailed analysis of teaching and learning and inspectors' observations and checks during the inspection confirmed this judgement. Lessons are frequently exciting, challenging, and enjoyable, characterised by rapid progress arising from students being encouraged to delve into their work and fathom out answers for themselves. In the very best lessons high quality learning is fostered through independent and collaborative working. In many lessons, students worked well together and showed excellent skills in terms of self- and peer-assessment. High expectations and challenge are key features of most

lessons. Students are often encouraged to read for themselves for research and pleasure. Written work is varied and challenging. In some lessons, where outcomes are good rather than outstanding, not all opportunities to promote literacy and numeracy are seized with consistency, through the full range of subjects. Occasionally lessons finish abruptly, denying students opportunities to reflect on, and explain precisely, what they have learnt. In a minority of cases, plenary sessions at the end of lessons are rushed and rely too much on the teacher saying what should have happened, rather than the students explaining what has happened.

Teachers take full advantage of opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teamwork and responsibility are fostered well and, in many lessons, often quite deep moral and cultural issues are discussed with maturity. The outstanding curriculum has a positive impact on teaching, helping to ensure that lessons are engaging and interesting.

An overwhelming majority of parents and carers are happy with the quality of teaching provided. As one commented: 'Strong and dedicated teachers in a number of subjects have helped my son to do far better than we had hoped for.' Many other parents and carers expressed similar sentiments.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All students are provided with working environments that are safe, secure and well cared for. In inspection questionnaires, students, parents and carers all indicated that the school is safe. Although a small minority of parents, carers and students expressed disquiet about behaviour, evidence shows that behaviour over time is at least good and most often outstanding. Indeed, in many of the lessons observed, students' excellent behaviour made a significant contribution to their learning. Students have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe and have a well-developed understanding of the different forms of bullying. Incidents of bullying and harassment, including those based on race or gender, are rare. When they arise, they are dealt with quickly and appropriately. Exclusions are very low and a highly effective disciplinary system which, at some levels involves the governing body, has been developed. This system is understood by students; many of them praise its contribution to ensuring outstanding behaviour. Attendance is above the national average. In part, these highly positive outcomes reflect improvements in the personalised and innovative curriculum, which is successfully engaging all students and helping them to high achievement.

Another aspect of the excellent behaviour is the responsibility placed on the students themselves. Students in all year groups are given scope to seek positions of responsibility and act as leaders. Noticeable aspects of this are the opportunity for senior sixth form students to sit on the governing body and for students in all years to participate in student leadership teams. Students are involved in other programmes such as anti-bullying campaigns, and they can air their views and opinions through their various councils. Students are proud to be members of the school. Many, and especially some exceedingly impressive and mature sixth formers, act as superb ambassadors for the school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. Although in post for less than two years, he has skilfully built on the strengths he inherited as well as providing a clear vision about how further improvements can be gained. He is extremely well supported by his excellent deputies, a talented senior team, a visionary, supporting, yet demanding governing body and a superb, keen and committed staff. Morale is high. All respondents to the staff inspection questionnaire said they were proud to work at Gordano.

There is a strong focus on improving students' achievement. Equality of opportunity is promoted vigorously, especially through the broad and innovative curriculum, and discrimination is not tolerated. The monitoring and tracking of students' work is thorough and effective. The performance of different groups is closely monitored, ensuring that any gaps in performance are identified and closed. Provision for all students is outstanding and there are no significant variations in the achievements of different groups; all, including those in the sixth form, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, are making outstanding progress. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern. The school site is safe. Appropriate provision, including detailed risk assessments, is made for all activities whether off-site or in the school.

Accurate self-evaluation has led to improvements in teaching and learning. Improved target setting has resulted in better academic, personal and social outcomes. An effective focus on professional development for staff has also contributed to the improved outcomes by enhancing the quality of teaching. The excellent governing body has a keen understanding of the challenges being faced. Its members give senior leaders strong support and they are fully involved in monitoring progress and holding the school to account. This quality of self-evaluation ensures an excellent capacity for further improvements.

The excellent broad and varied curriculum has led to better achievement in all years, including the sixth form, because students can follow programmes that meet their needs. The improved curriculum, allied to high quality extra-curricular provision through music, sport, drama and a variety of clubs, effectively promotes students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Work with schools in Europe and Rwanda, for example, demonstrates the commitment to extending the students' horizons well beyond north Somerset. Parents' and carers' satisfaction is extremely high. As one parent commented: 'Gordano is an excellent school run by staff who care about children.' This comment reflects the views of a high number of parents and carers and is unequivocally endorsed by the inspection team.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 April 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Gordano School, Portishead, BS20 7QR

My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed our recent visit. We enjoyed talking with you and learning about your views. As you told us, yours is an outstanding school. It provides a very high level of education.

So many things we saw and heard about impressed us. Teaching is outstanding. You are taught to a very high level by an accomplished staff team. Your teachers are keen for all of you to succeed. In lessons, the work set is challenging and engages and motivates you. Lessons are frequently outstanding but we have challenged the senior staff and governors to ensure that even more lessons reach this level. We have asked them to improve teaching still further by ensuring that in all lessons every opportunity is taken to develop your skills in literacy and numeracy and to develop the use of plenary sessions so that you are given even more chances to reflect on your work and discuss your learning.

We liked the extent to which you contribute to school life and were impressed by the many opportunities you have to exercise responsibility, including senior students serving on the governing body. Other things that impressed us were your keenness in lessons; your excellent attendance and your outstanding behaviour. By maintaining and building on these very high standards, you can help the staff secure the improvements we have requested.

Thank you for making our visit so enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham
Lead inspector

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