



Wolverhampton Girls' High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104402
LEA Wolverhampton
Inspection number 277149
Inspection dates 28 February 2006 to 28 February 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Smith HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Tettenhall Road
School category	Foundation		Tettenhall
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV6 0BY
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01902 312186
Number on roll	735	Fax number	01902 312187
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Professor Peter Ribbins
Date of previous inspection	20 January 2003	Headteacher	Mrs Julie Lawton

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The Inspector met with the headteacher, groups of staff, students and governors, and scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. The inspection also took account of national and school data comparing the students' progress with students in similar schools.

Description of the school

Wolverhampton Girls' High is a very popular and oversubscribed selective specialist language school. Attainment on entry to the school is well above average. The school draws students from a wide geographical region around Wolverhampton and beyond. There are students from a wide range of backgrounds, but the proportion from disadvantaged backgrounds is much lower than average. There are 738 students on roll, including 204 in the sixth form. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is higher than average. The proportion of students receiving free school meals is very low and only five students are identified as having learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The inspection confirms the school's and students' view that it is an outstanding school. It meets well its aim for students to achieve the best they are capable of in all aspects of school life: to become confident, self-aware, independent thinking, and able to relate well to others. The students' pride and enjoyment of school are palpable and are testimony to the excellent care and support they receive, as well as an exciting curriculum, which enables them to respond to very good teaching and attain very high standards. The students are excellently behaved and this is a result of exceptional trust by the school to allow students to be independent and take responsibility for many aspects of school life.

The school has used its specialist status well to raise standards in languages at all levels and extend the curriculum to allow all students to take three languages in Key Stage 3 and two languages at GCSE. In addition, most study a language in the sixth form. The school has further extended its local and international links and increased cultural awareness, including offering community language classes after school. It also works well to support schools in the local area in developing language teaching.

Improvements in the quality of physical education and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) since the previous report show the school has an excellent capacity to improve.

The school is very well led by an astute headteacher who is very ably supported by an extremely effective senior management team. Governors are very supportive but challenge appropriately and hold the school to account well. The school gives very good value for money.

Although very high achieving, the school is not complacent. It holds subject and pastoral leaders responsible for the standards achieved to ensure further improvements are made. This means middle managers are very effective in having a clear overview of their department's strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, schemes of work are adapted and the quality of teaching is improved.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Excellent relationships and high aspirations for its students ensure the school has an outstanding sixth form. Students take much responsibility for the life of the school. They make an excellent contribution in supporting students in lower years, for example acting as prefects and learning mentors and producing the junior school drama production. They respond maturely to these responsibilities, achieve very high standards and are justifiably proud of their school. For a very small minority, attendance has been weaker than that of their peers and this has had a negative impact upon the results they gain at A-level.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards are outstanding. Students enter the school with standards well above average and make excellent progress. They attain well above national averages at all levels of comparison and there is no significant variation between different groups within the school.

At Key Stage 3, students attain very highly. They make good progress and in each subject over 70% of the students gained the highest possible level in 2005.

Standards at Key Stage 4 are very high, with all students gaining five or more higher level GCSE passes in 2005. In particular, 78% of all grades were either A or A*, and 60% of the students gained nine or more GCSEs at grades A or A*. Results were particularly high in Japanese, where all students gained a grade A*, German, food technology, science and geography.

At A-level, results in 2005 showed a further improvement from the previous very high standards. Over three quarters of the grades were either A or B and there was almost a 100% pass rate. The average points per student was in the top 1% nationally, as it has been for at least the last three years. Even so, the school is not complacent and it undertakes a thorough analysis of results and of students' work to ensure anyone who appears to be underperforming is supported and that they improve.

There is a strong emphasis on making good use of assessment within lessons and this has ensured students make good progress.

The school set appropriate targets, which it met in 2005. It has now raised its targets to ensure greater challenge, especially in response to its specialist school status.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of the students is outstanding. Students thoroughly enjoy coming to school, as shown by the questionnaire results, because lessons and activities are stimulating and relevant. They have a real enthusiasm for learning and they feel valued. Attendance rates are very high. Social awareness is impressive and students keep a portfolio of their work within the community. The school runs an effective enterprise day and elements of enterprise within the personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme. ICT and language lessons prepare students well for future economic awareness.

Students' self-discipline is exemplary and means the school is a very pleasant and orderly place where students feel safe and learning flourishes. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with well, including effective use of older students as mentors, and students are involved in developing appropriate procedures to ensure these are kept to the bare minimum.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is effectively developed across the curriculum. High expectations and the ethos of tolerance and

respect are tangible and indicative of the importance the school puts on these aspects. Students are confident in keeping themselves safe both in and out of school. They are well aware of issues linked to alcohol, drugs and sex education. Students aspire to healthy lifestyles. They have been proactive in changing the school meals menu to include healthier options, which they choose enthusiastically. They also take part in an impressive range of physical activities.

The students' contribution to the school and wider community is very good. The school council is very active and is pivotal in influencing school policies and procedures. For example it has improved the school's environment and influenced changes to the school uniform. Students are extremely well prepared for leaving school and continuing in higher education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and expertise, which are used well to raise students' knowledge, skills and understanding. A notable feature of the teaching is the development of excellent relationships that leads to outstanding behaviour in lessons and confident participation in discussion. Students clearly enjoy learning and are very self-motivated to work independently in reaching goals; they also work well collaboratively.

Lessons are well planned and carefully structured so that students are challenged to extend their thinking. Good use is made of ICT to enhance learning. Students are encouraged to develop good communication skills when debating ideas and concepts within lessons, which is an important element in raising self-confidence and enhancing oracy skills.

The use of assessment to promote learning and raise achievement is excellent. Through the effective use of target setting and detailed feedback in marked work, students are very clear about their strengths and how they can improve. Good use is made of self and peer assessment to consolidate learning.

Through monitoring and sharing good practice, the school ensures all teachers set high expectations within lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Overall, the curriculum is outstanding and is constantly being reviewed and evaluated. Recent changes have extended the languages available and enhanced students' ICT provision by introducing a vocational GCSE qualification in Key Stage 3, which prepares students well for future years. In the sixth form, students follow a rich variety of A-level subjects. The school works well with two neighbouring schools to extend the A-level options and is extending this to enhance options for students aged 14-19.

The specialist school status is utilised well to further extend the courses available, to which the school plans to add humanities to its areas of specialism, and to enhance the use of ICT across all subjects. Physical education is now a strength within the school and the opening of suitable accommodation has greatly improved the provision since the last inspection. Gifted and talented students are identified and extension work to meet their needs is well developed within schemes of work.

The school provides very good opportunities for extended work outside normal hours. For example, a large variety of sports clubs, support and extension classes and performing arts, including inter-house competitions allows many students to extend their learning. The curriculum is enriched through extensive use of external resources and the community. A wide variety of visits is carefully integrated into the schemes of work. Preparation for the world of work is good; events such as enterprise days and collaboration with local employers contribute well to students' education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The support and guidance for students is very good. Parents are justified in their very strong tribute to the school's care for their children. The family atmosphere means that all students know who to turn to if they have concerns and are confident that their problems are sorted out properly. First aid and medical procedures are very well organised.

Students achieve well with their work because teachers make it clear to them what they need to do to improve their learning. Within departments there is very accurate tracking of students' achievement. Should any student not be doing as well as expected, the staff are quick to find ways to help them improve and students are confident in asking for, and receiving, support should they need it.

The school has a very supportive pastoral system, which helps track and support students' progress as well as giving very clear and effective guidance at each stage of choice. Good use is made of learning mentors to support students. The school has effective processes for child protection.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding because the school is very well led by an effective headteacher who is ably supported by the senior leadership team. The leadership team has an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has formulated a comprehensive improvement plan, which includes clear and appropriate success criteria. Governors hold the school to account very well and provide excellent support and challenge to the headteacher and specific departments, to whom they are attached as link governors.

The school has a very effective departmental review system, which holds subject leaders responsible and empowers them to evaluate the quality of provision and take

appropriate steps to improve. This has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and standards.

In its self-evaluation, the school has effectively gained the views of students and parents, which have informed areas for improvement, such as changes to the uniform, greater coherence with coursework deadlines, and improved communication with parents. The school works well with other schools locally, particularly in supporting gifted and talented students and enhancing the teaching of languages.

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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 quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
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	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 behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly 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	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	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 are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your very positive responses and excellent behaviour when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting with you and your teachers. Your very justified pride in your school was very clear and you respond well to the trust your school gives you, allowing you to act independently and responsibly.

Your school is outstanding. It meets its aim for students to achieve the best they are capable of in all aspects of school life - to become confident, self-aware, independent thinking, and to be able to relate well to others. You work well with your teachers to make sure that the school is a stimulating and interesting place and you support your fellow students very well. Your positive comments show how much you like school and appreciate the work of the staff.

I was pleased to see how you could influence what happens in school and how you take health issues very seriously, for example how many of you choose the healthy option at lunchtimes. You enjoy some very interesting lessons and activities that are very well taught and a varied curriculum, including a very large variety of extra-curricular clubs and sports.

Your school is very well led and knows its strengths and also the areas it wants to improve. The school's examination results are very high but for some students in the sixth form poor attendance has meant that they did not achieve as well as they could. It is up to individuals to show greater responsibility and ensure they attend as often as possible.

I wish you well for the future and hope you enjoy your time and are successful at this very caring and supportive school.