

# Beaconsfield High School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110528
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	288703
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Kennedy HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1092
6th form	304
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr C Hunt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms P Castagnoli
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	Wattleton Road Beaconsfield HP9 1RR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 673043
<b>Fax number</b>	01494 670715

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	288703

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Beaconsfield High School is a selective girls' grammar school. It is an average size school but has a large sixth form of over 300 students. The school has specialist status for technology and languages. Students come from a wide area of Buckinghamshire and some nearby towns and most are from advantaged backgrounds.

Most students are of White British origin. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is around the national average, and of these the largest group is of students of Indian heritage. The proportion of students with English as an additional language is above the national average with none at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Beaconsfield High School is an outstanding school where students have keen appetites for learning, flourish and make excellent progress. Their high standards and achievements are a credit to the staff, governors and, not least, to the students themselves who work hard and make best use of the superb academic and pastoral support they receive. The school exemplifies its motto: 'Discovering and developing individual potential'.

Walking around the school one is struck by the purposeful and friendly learning atmosphere where individuals are shown a high level of respect. Students' behaviour is excellent. They enjoy their learning experiences in lessons and the impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer.

Students respond positively to the good curriculum and to the excellent teaching. The foundations laid by the school result in students leaving being well placed to be articulate, independent learners, responsible and mature individuals and successful in their future lives. Their achievement is exemplified by the consistency with which they meet challenging targets and the exceptionally high standards they reach year after year. They make excellent progress in lessons, develop high level learning skills and a thirst for learning. One parent, for example, wrote that teaching 'lit up her daughter's imagination'.

The headteacher and her leadership team, strongly supported by governors, set a clear strategic direction and manage the school very well. Their impact on raising achievement and personal development is very evident. They ensure the school's ethos and values are shared and owned effectively at all levels. Shared expectations by staff, students and parents for high standards and achievement, is coupled with a strong focus on a supportive learning environment.

Parents are supportive of the school's work and appreciate what it does. Their views are perhaps summed up best by one parent who wrote that her girls '... are receiving an excellent education, socially, academically and physically'. There is a small minority of parents, however, who refer to some variability in teaching and who are not convinced that their views are given sufficient weight.

The school has progressed very well since the last inspection, is aware of the need to continually do better and has an excellent capacity to make further improvements. The school is not complacent. It recognises the need to do even more to champion outstanding teaching throughout the school and to make still further improvement to the curriculum such as developing more opportunities for information and communication technology (ICT) in the curriculum.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

The large, outstandingly effective sixth form rightly has a reputation for high standards and achievement. With almost 75 percent A/B grades at A level, sixth formers are well-placed to go on to university. Many students take five AS courses in Year 12 which broadens their education very successfully. Sixth form students are fully involved in school life and enthusiastically contribute to the many leadership responsibilities offered to them. This contributes significantly to their outstanding personal development and well-being.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding and students receive the same, high quality care, guidance and support as in the main school. Students have helpful advice on a range of practical topics such as managing their finances and road safety. They are extremely well prepared to progress into higher education or training although some would like more help completing their university application forms. Students are very happy in the sixth form, work hard and know that teaching and learning are outstanding. The effectiveness of the sixth can be summed by a student who said, 'The programme in the sixth form is really good, I would always come back here again!'

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

- Take further steps to promote outstanding teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Ensure that all students have sufficient curriculum opportunities to develop their ICT skills.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Standards are high in all years. Students make outstanding progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9. In 2006, in the end of Year 9 national tests, over two-thirds of students attained the highest level in English and science. Mathematics results were even more impressive. Students who enter the school with slightly lower standards than the large majority and those who have learning difficulties make exceptionally good progress. Students achieve well because of the excellent teaching and support they receive and because of their own very positive attitudes. At Key Stage 4, all students achieved at least five GCSE A\*-C grades, including English and mathematics, with two thirds of the grades being A\*/A. Students in the sixth form achieve extremely well with four out of five students attaining A/B grades in half the A level subjects taken in 2006.

When a GCSE, AS or A level subject does not result in the very best grades the school explores the reasons and takes action to improve things fast. GCSE English and science were targeted during the last academic year and as a result of immediate action by the senior leadership team and staff, grades went up significantly in 2006. In the same year, product design results were disappointing. The school's careful analysis highlighted weaknesses in coursework which staff are tackling effectively. A similar pattern of robust action is seen in the sixth form when results in a particular subject are below expectations. The consistent trend overall, however, is one of high achievement and standards year-on-year.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The exceptionally caring and supportive atmosphere provides a firm foundation for students' outstanding personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students enjoy school and attendance rates are high. Their very strong moral and social development is evident in the way they interact with one another and with teachers, and through their excellent participation in the wide range of responsibilities offered. Students have broad involvement in the arts generally and an appreciation of cultures beyond their own. An example was their summer music concert showcasing music from classical through to swing and jazz.

Students are positive about healthy lifestyles and welcome the healthy eating options available to them at the school. They participate in a wide range of sports beyond the school day, enjoying activities such as rowing, and gymnastics. They feel the school is a very safe environment and are confident that any concerns they may have will be dealt with quickly.

Students recognise that their work plays a major role in the quality of life in the school. They respond well, for example, to the chance of being involved in the recruitment of new staff. Students' contributions beyond the school are extensive and include acting as sports leaders for local primary aged children, running dance lessons at a local special needs school, and fund-raising for needy causes. Students exhibit an excellent range of skills that will contribute significantly to their future economic well-being, including the more generic skills of leadership and collaborative working.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Excellent relationships and mutual respect result in students' mature behaviour in lessons, their willingness to discuss ideas and think critically, and their eagerness to achieve academic success. These qualities lead to outstanding achievement.

Teachers know their students extremely well and what is needed to get the best out of them. In the majority of lessons teachers' planning is extremely good and they use an interesting variety of teaching styles to engage and extend all levels of ability. Students make particularly rapid progress in lessons when teachers share their enthusiasm for their subject, maintain a brisk pace, make students think deeply by asking probing questions, and encourage one-to-one and group work. Teaching of this high calibre fosters a love of learning and encourages students to work independently. Evidence of outstanding teaching can be seen throughout the school and in the sixth form where teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to plan challenging tasks which require analytical and critical thinking skills.

In the lessons where teaching is good but not outstanding, teaching is more instructive, and activities are not quite as varied. Overall, marking is good but can vary between departments where occasionally, teachers do not give constructive comments to help students to improve their work. The school is aware of this and take steps through its monitoring programme to bring about greater consistency.

Teachers regularly assess students' learning and give them the opportunity to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. Students are encouraged to challenge and be creative with their ideas, and they respond with enthusiasm. One student remarked, 'You get to argue with your teachers - it gives you great sense of pleasure when they have to admit you have a valid point.' Teachers are very skilful at showing students how to tackle questions and prepare well for their examinations.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The good quality curriculum is well matched to students' needs and aspirations and is one of the reasons for consistent progression and the excellent standards achieved. Curriculum enrichment is outstanding and complements the academic studies on offer. High levels of participation ensure that students develop a range of artistic, aesthetic and cultural skills.

In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is complemented by additional courses such as drama, Latin and a second foreign language. The 'Learning to Learn' course introduced in Year 7 supports students' confidence in different learning styles and encourages more independent learning. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum offers a wide range of courses and enrichment opportunities. In the sixth form it offers students the chance to develop sharp thinking skills, for example, through its effective critical thinking programme. The school's technology and language specialisms offer students a wider choice and contribute to the improved quality of teaching and learning. The school has recently taken steps to provide religious education opportunities for all sixth formers. However, ICT is not firmly embedded enough in the timetabled curriculum and this has had an impact on the number of students who then choose to continue to study it as a 'twilight' subject.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Care, guidance and support are excellent overall. The school takes great care of its students and staff show a strong commitment to meeting their needs. High quality academic and pastoral support and monitoring alert the school to a student's possible underachievement at an early stage. These systems trigger a wide range of support to help students overcome difficulties and make excellent progress. All students, including vulnerable children are well supported. The school's excellent 'drop-in' centre offers students the opportunity to obtain confidential health and other personal advice and guidance. It is a facility that is also offered to students from the neighbouring secondary school. Arrangements for safeguarding students are effective. Transfer provision is of high quality at all key stages and prepares students well for further education.

Many opportunities exist for students to meet with teachers to discuss and tackle subject concerns, one student remarking, 'teachers will always have time for you, no matter how busy they are'. The school has developed some positive approaches to helping students prepare for examinations. For example, Year 11 subject departments now offer focused subject seminars during study leave.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The high level of achievement and outstanding quality of care of students are a direct result of excellent leadership and management. The headteacher, ably supported by a relatively new

leadership team and strongly developing middle managers, promote a culture of highly effective school improvement.

Staff at all levels have a strong work ethic and set high standards for themselves. They have a common understanding of the priorities for the school and a huge commitment to continuous improvement. Staff are impressive in the work they do, often over and above what would normally be expected. They are encouraged and supported to develop professionally so that many move on to more senior posts in the school.

Evaluation is well established in the school and a self-critical culture exists. A strong feature of the leadership is an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and what it needs to do to improve. For example, leaders at all levels have already established a number of effective measures to make further improvements, following a recent review carried out by the local authority.

Competent, purposeful, efficient and effective monitoring systems ensure that improvement is maintained at pace. The school leadership team is not complacent about its improvement and recognises that more can be done to ensure that best practice is developed and shared more widely among staff as a whole. Recent budgetary difficulties have been managed effectively and the school is now well placed to make some needed improvements to accommodation so that the learning environment can be enhanced. The combination of support with a high level of challenge from the outstanding governing body contributes in no small way to the school's excellent capacity to improve further.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	1	1
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
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	
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

15 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Beaconsfield High School, Wattleton Road, Beaconsfield, HP9 1RR

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave us. This letter summarises the findings of our inspection. If you want to read the complete report you can download it from [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

We enjoyed discussing with you the work that you are doing and looking at the excellent progress that you are making. You talked enthusiastically about how much you gain from being a student at 'Becky High' and in particular about the care and support you get from staff to help you do as well as you do. You set very high standards for yourselves and have been impressive in the progress you make. This is in no small measure because of your own hard work, but also that of your teachers who guide you very well and provide you with a safe environment.

Your school is outstanding with very many strengths. Strong leadership and management ensure that the school provides you with an exceptional quality of education. This enables you to make excellent progress academically and achieve outstanding examination results. You also achieve highly in other areas of school life such as the arts, sport and your contribution to the local and wider community. Your relationships with each other and with your teachers are exemplary.

To make your school even better we have asked your school to:

- consider how to spread the outstanding practice that exists in teaching and learning throughout the school
- ensure you have sufficient curriculum opportunities to develop your ICT skills.

You, too, can play your part by helping the school to achieve these aims. Thank you for taking part in the inspection. We wish you success for the future.

With best wishes,

John Kennedy

Her Majesty's Inspector