

The Frances Bardsley School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102351
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	307980
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School (total)	1222
Sixth form	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev R S P Hingley
Headteacher	Mrs S E Philipps
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
School address	Brentwood Road Romford RM1 2RR
Telephone number	01708 447368
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Students are drawn from a wide area around Havering. The proportion eligible for a free school meal is below average. About a fifth of students come from a broad range of minority ethnic backgrounds and this is higher than in most schools. A small proportion speak English as an additional language but very few are beginners in English. The percentages of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well below national averages. However, many of these students have significant levels of need including profound learning needs and being on the autism spectrum. The school has specialist status in the visual arts and an Arts Goldmark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Frances Bardsley is a good school where students achieve well. A positive ethos for learning and an orderly atmosphere help students to feel that they are an integral part of the school community. This contributes to their good personal development and well-being.

Standards are above average by the end of Year 11 indicating good progress from average starting points. Students achieve well across all key stages. They achieve particularly well in English because they are given very thorough guidance on how to improve their work. Most students achieve reasonably well in science and mathematics, but not as well as in English. Teaching in mathematics is sometimes too directed and work not always matched sufficiently closely to students' needs. In science, students' investigative and analytical skills are not as strongly developed as their scientific knowledge. This makes the transition to A level courses difficult for some students. Nonetheless, the school meets the challenging targets set for students. Although results in 2007 were not as good as usual, due largely to staffing difficulties, in 2008, all targets were met or exceeded. Results were better than in 2007 and significantly so at GCSE. Students' performance in the visual arts is outstanding and results of examinations in visual arts subjects at both GCSE and A level are well above national averages.

Whilst teaching is good overall, it ranges widely in quality. There are some strong aspects of teaching such as teachers' subject knowledge. This is used well in lessons to provide clear explanations and examples so that students develop good subject knowledge and understanding themselves. Hence, they make good progress. However, lessons are sometimes over directed with insufficient opportunity for students to take an active role in their learning. This has the effect of limiting opportunities to promote students' independence and capacity to think for themselves. It also detracts from their enjoyment. The school's visual arts specialism makes a strong contribution to the school's ethos and to the achievement of students. Excellent teaching in this area inspires students' creativity and imagination.

Good attendance supports students' learning and helps them to make good progress. They behave impeccably even when presented, occasionally, with routine activities and uninspiring teaching. Students are well cared for and supported. Systems for academic guidance are good but not consistently used. Hence, students are sometimes not sure of their targets or, if they know them, not always clear about what to do to achieve them. Good relationships between staff and students encourage students to ask for help or discuss their concerns with members of staff.

A good curriculum ensures that students receive a broad based education, tailored well to their different needs. A wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities contribute well to students' personal development and the wider development of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community and develop good understanding of others. Regular involvement in sporting activities helps to develop healthy lifestyles.

The headteacher provides a clear direction for development. She together with her senior management team have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this effectively to make improvements. The school has good capacity to improve because it is focused on the right priorities and staff and governors are clear what these are. This is evident in the good improvement since the last inspection and the school's leadership has steered the school effectively through a period of staffing difficulties thus helping to reverse

the dip in standards in 2007. With support from senior staff, middle managers are working effectively to improve provision, and hence performance, in their areas of responsibility.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students are very happy with life in the sixth form. They appreciate the warm relationships with teachers and fellow students. These benefit their achievement. Students' personal development is good. Each one is well known to staff and their good progress is nurtured in a friendly and caring atmosphere.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and focus well on examination requirements. The atmosphere in lessons is collaborative and behaviour excellent. Occasionally, when faced by lessons dominated by teachers, students can be too passive.

Some students express reservations about some inconsistencies in teaching and this is reflected in variations in achievement. Although students attain above average standards at GCSE, not all stay on in the sixth form and the standards of those who do are broadly average. Attainment at the end of the sixth form is above average. Hence, achievement is good overall though there are some variations in subjects. At A level the school's performance is consistently strong in visual arts subjects and English. However, results in biology and chemistry are not as good as in other subjects but show an improving trend.

The curriculum is satisfactory but insufficient links with outside providers mean the range of courses available, including the vocational offer, is limited. Some small teaching groups do not provide balanced learning experiences. However, there are numerous popular enrichment activities.

Leadership and management are good. Students appreciate the many kindnesses they receive. Careful analysis of examination and other data means that provision and achievement are carefully monitored. Those in danger of slipping back receive supportive intervention.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching consistently enables students to be actively engaged and develop their independence as learners.
- Ensure that the school's systems for target setting are used consistently so that students have a secure understanding of how to improve.
- Develop wider links with other schools and providers to extend the curriculum in the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school has a history of above average results at the end of Years 9 and 11. Due to mostly to staffing difficulties, there was a dip in performance in 2007 although it remained above average overall. This was most noticeable in mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 where results fell from above average to broadly average. Performance in these subjects was much better in 2008. In English, results at the end of Year 9 are usually well above average. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C also fell in 2007 but the improvement in 2008 was significant. Results over the last four years show an improving trend at GCSE. Performance at GCSE is particularly strong in subjects such as English, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education and the visual arts. Performance in

mathematics and particularly in science is improving. Though standards are above average in these subjects, they are not as strong as in English. Students who find learning difficult and those who have significant levels of need achieve well because of the good support they receive. Almost all students gain a recognisable qualification by the end of Year 11.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students respond well to the many opportunities provided for them to be thoughtful, healthy and responsible members of their community. Through assemblies, personal, social and health education lessons, and, outstandingly through the visual arts, girls are able to develop a strong appreciation of their own and other's cultures and their own rights and responsibilities. They have a strong desire to do well and are prepared to work hard. Hence, they pay very good attention to their teachers even where lessons lack excitement, pace or challenge. Students know how to be safe and how to stay safe. They eat and exercise healthily and much appreciate the range of clubs and activities which encourage their fitness and commitment. There are many opportunities for students to contribute to the school and wider community through a substantial variety of charity and other initiatives, as prefects and mentors, or as members of the school council. These are taken up enthusiastically. Girls are prepared satisfactorily for their future work and education. They are capable speakers and writers, but their capacity to work independently and think for themselves is not as well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare students well for examinations especially in English. In most lessons, work is well structured so that students make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are studying. Staff establish good relationships with students. Dedicated teaching assistants are usually well deployed and offer good support for students with learning needs. There are good examples of teaching that is matched well to students' needs. For example, this was particularly evident in PE where careful planning allowed students with physical disabilities to play a full part.

However, in some lessons the pace of learning is slow and depends too much on the teacher talking to the class. In these lessons, teachers do not do enough to get students actively engaged in their learning. Whilst there is good questioning in many lessons, teachers are at varying stages of probing students in order to assess how well they are learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The contribution of the visual arts specialism is outstanding. All students in Key Stage 4 are able to choose from a wide variety of options to suit their interests and needs, including alternative programmes and Young Apprenticeship courses that incorporate work experience and college study. However, because of the way the curriculum is timetabled, students have to catch up on the work missed whilst they are at college or out on work placements. This has an adverse impact on their learning in other subjects.

The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra curricular sports, drama, music and visual arts activities. Girls also have the opportunity to study new courses such as Online Latin. All year 11 students engage in a two-week work experience programme which forms an integrated part of the curriculum. The school also organises a wide variety of educational visits to places such as China, Iceland, and New York. This international dimension to students learning provides excellent opportunities for students' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares well for its students. Procedures for child protection and risk assessment are robust. Regular attendance is promoted effectively and there are good systems for managing behaviour. Links with external agencies and professionals are used well to support individual students, especially the most vulnerable. The school makes good use of counsellors and mentors to support students both in their personal and academic development. Support for lower attaining students is good.

Systems for academic guidance are good and have improved since the last inspection. However, not all staff are consistent in their application of these. Consequently, students are not always clear about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by the senior leadership team. There are good systems in place for senior managers to work with middle managers to provide both support and challenge for their roles. As a result, middle managers effectively manage their areas of responsibility. However, not all are sufficiently involved or skilled in monitoring their areas of work, especially the quality of teaching. Senior staff are very actively involved in checking the quality of the school's work and have a positive impact on moving the school forward. Systems for tracking progress are robust and used well by subject leaders and senior staff to ensure students are on track to meet challenging targets. Governors have good involvement in setting targets. They have a good overview of the school's work and provide good support for its future development. The visual arts specialism is exceptionally well led and managed and has a very positive impact across the whole school and within the local community. The school's leadership effectively promotes students' understanding of the wider world as well as their ability to get on with those who are different.

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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?	2	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

13 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Frances Bardsley School for Girls, Romford, RM1 2RR

We enjoyed visiting your school and would like to thank you for making us feel welcome. We particularly enjoyed talking to you about your work and views of the school and were impressed with your excellent behaviour and attitudes. The school gives you a good education and ensures that you make good progress in your learning.

We were particularly struck by the following features of the school.

- You want to do well and, thus, put effort into your work.
- The Arts Specialism makes an excellent contribution to the school's provision.
- You do particularly well in English, arts subjects, ICT and PE and these are the subjects you most frequently said you enjoyed most.
- Your headteacher works well with the senior staff to look at ways of making the school better and, in particular, at ways of making the teaching even better.
- The school promotes strong links with the local and wider community enabling you to develop a better understanding of people from different walks of life.

There are a few improvements to make and these include.

- Making sure that you are more actively involved in lessons to help you become more independent as learners.
- Ensuring that you are receiving clear guidance on how to improve your work systematically across the school.
- Working with other schools and colleges to give you more choice of subjects in the sixth form, including vocational subjects.

You can contribute to improvements by asking staff about how you can make your work better.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gulshan Kayembe

Lead Inspector