



Bishop Wordsworth's Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126508
Local Authority Wiltshire
Inspection number 293579
Inspection dates 5–6 December 2006
Reporting inspector Brenda Cusdin HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	11 The Close
School category	Voluntary aided		Salisbury
Age range of pupils	11–18		SP1 2EB
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01722 333851
Number on roll (school)	601	Fax number	01722 325899
Number on roll (6th form)	264		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	N Beer
		Headteacher	Stuart Smallwood
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	5–6 December 2006	293579

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Students joining in Year 7 come from over 45 different schools covering a wide area. Their attainment on entry is well above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is much lower than in schools nationally. There are few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few students are eligible for free school meals. Most students continue into the school's sixth form and around 30 new students join in Year 12. The sixth form is very large. Since 1998 a significant proportion of sixth form courses have been run collaboratively with the nearest grammar school for girls. Bishop Wordsworth's became Voluntary Aided in 1999 and was granted specialist status in languages in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'We have been really pleased with the progress our sons have made. The school provides an excellent environment to help them learn.'

'We feel immensely fortunate to be able to send our two sons to school each day fully confident that they will be safe, happy and well taught.'

'We are delighted with the extra trips and visits – broadening our son's life experiences and balancing the large amount of time spent on academic study.'

The students confirmed these parents' views wholeheartedly. They spoke very appreciatively of their dedicated teachers and the additional support they receive when needed. The students are proud of Bishop Wordsworth's and what it stands for. One said, 'I can't imagine myself being anywhere else'. They are keen to succeed, work hard and make outstanding progress during their time at the school.

There are many impressive features that combine to make Bishop Wordsworth's an outstanding school. Standards are exceptionally high. The personal development and well-being of the students are impressive. The outstanding curriculum, including its recent focus on languages and the international dimension, effectively prepares students for the future.

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher, senior team and staff share a passionate commitment to the school and give their time generously to run out-of-hours activities. The headteacher has an inspiring vision for the school, seeking to provide the best all-round education in an ever-changing and competitive world. Potential innovations are researched thoroughly.

The school is engaged in a healthy debate about the effectiveness of different teaching and learning styles for its students. A small group of students is researching how you can judge learning in a lesson and the learning approaches that students like. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and clearly aim for high standards but many lessons lack the range of learning approaches featured in the students' research.

The governors actively support the school and are well organised and not afraid to question. Since the last inspection, standards have risen even higher and great strides have been made in eliminating the widespread problems with accommodation, although some remain. Bishop Wordsworth's capacity to improve yet further is excellent.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding sixth form where students are extremely well prepared for academic studies at university and develop as well-rounded young people. Expectations are high and standards achieved in A-level examinations are outstanding.

The collaboration with the girls' grammar school is highly effective and very well managed. The extensive range of AS- and A-level subjects and the stimulating

enrichment courses are valued by the students and promote their social and cultural development exceptionally well. Managers of both schools regularly monitor the students' progress and the quality of teaching. Effective action is taken to improve provision in the few instances where standards are perceived to be lower than expected and features of good practice are shared.

What the school should do to improve further

- Capitalise on the school's debate about teaching and learning styles so that it results in more consistently outstanding practice.
- Ensure that inadequacies in accommodation are improved as speedily as possible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Standards are exceptionally high. National test and examination results have risen even higher than at the time of the last inspection. The excellent results demonstrate that students make outstanding progress over their time at the school. They reflect the school's ethos which encourages maximum effort and fascination with knowledge, combined with good teaching and the students' own strong determination to achieve. The few students who have learning difficulties or disabilities are very well supported, and achieve as well as everyone else.

Standards in Year 9 are well above the national average. In 2006 virtually all students reached two or more levels above national expectations in mathematics and science and over half did so in English. Standards in Year 11 are equally impressive. In 2006 virtually all students gained at least five A* to C GCSE grades and three quarters achieved at least five A* to A grades. Over one third gained A* to A grades in all their GCSE subjects.

There has been impressive year-on-year improvement in A-level results. In 2006 virtually all students achieved passes at grade C or above and almost three quarters of all entries achieved A to B grades. Almost all students go on to university. They are well equipped for the academic rigour of higher education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students greatly enjoy coming to school, where they find the intellectual challenge particularly stimulating. They show mature and responsible attitudes to learning. The many gifted and talented students have developed excellent personal skills. Participation rates in sport of all kinds are high and this, together with the school's healthy food provision, helps students to adopt healthy lifestyles. Attendance is well above average. Behaviour is

exemplary throughout the school. Students say they feel safe in school and report that there is no bullying.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The strong Christian ethos permeates all aspects of school life. Students treat staff and each other with respect. They regularly provide for those less fortunate than themselves through charitable giving. They gain knowledge and understanding of their own culture and that of many other places in the world through a wide-ranging programme of visits and in-house activities, for example, language 'taster courses'. Students make an outstanding contribution to their community in many ways. The school council has an active role in discussing improvements. Sixth form students take on many responsibilities such as those of prefects, mentors of younger students and chapel duties.

Virtually all students stay on into the sixth form, for which they are prepared extremely well by their outstanding academic achievements in Year 11. Relevant work experience in professional placements is responsibly arranged by sixth form students themselves. They are very well prepared for life beyond school and eventual employment through their participation in enrichment courses such as in critical thinking and their visits to high-ranking universities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons often have good pace and high challenge, and students respond by producing high quality work. Good use of information and communication technology, including digital interactive whiteboards, also supports learning well. Many students appreciate their highly knowledgeable teachers, enthusiastically talking about their areas of expertise.

The school has engaged thoughtfully in debating the effectiveness of different styles of teaching and learning. The student research group has shared its initial findings about learning experiences with lower school students in assemblies and with teachers. Practical exploration and discussion are valued by students, as well as having changes of activity during lessons. The senior leadership team is aware that many lessons lack variety in learning approaches.

There is an extensive programme of homework which gives students good opportunities to apply the skills and knowledge introduced in lessons. Homework is marked regularly but marking does not always enable students to recognise what level they are working at or what they could do to reach higher standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and leads to exceptionally high standards and achievement. Students are offered a large number of GCSE and A-level courses that suit their aptitudes and needs very well. Modern foreign languages are promoted well and many students take advantage of the opportunity to study two languages. Additional enrichment languages such as Mandarin are well attended. There is very low demand for vocational courses but the curriculum prepares students well for future study and subsequent careers. There is outstanding provision for extra-curricular activities such as performing arts, sports and music, which are all highly popular. Trips and residential visits expand students' experiences exceptionally well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school provides an outstandingly supportive and inclusive environment but does not cosset students against the outside world. Staff promote personal confidence and self-reliance in their students and these are significant factors in the students' high achievement.

Very good team working ensures that students with particular difficulties are picked up quickly, monitored closely and helped towards successfully achieving their potential. Arrangements for child protection and the safeguarding of students are very good; for example, extended periods of construction work on the school site were supervised carefully. Incidents of bullying or other forms of harassment are dealt with quickly. The school has constructive relationships with outside agencies. All students receive very good careers advice, especially in relation to university entrance, which is of most interest to the students in this high-attaining school. The students say, 'There's always someone you can talk to'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school is extremely well led by the headteacher, who is respected by staff, students and parents. He is deeply committed to preserving the excellent traditions within the school but keen to see further development and willing to pursue new avenues.

The senior leadership team plays a key role in managing improvements and sustaining high quality in provision. The research project into teaching and learning styles is providing useful evidence to inform the school's timely debate about the approaches

used. Staff have bravely, and skilfully, worked with students to gain better insight into students' views about learning.

The school's effective improvement planning is based on a secure evaluation of performance data in every area of operation. The senior team has a comprehensive oversight of strengths and weaknesses in subject departments. However, the setting of individual targets for students requires further refinement to ensure that everyone recognises the degree of challenge that they represent and how students can benefit most from them.

Specialist status has been very well led and managed. It has a very positive impact on the school not just in terms of results but also through building an international dimension into the curriculum.

The governing body is effective, actively supporting this successful school and holding senior managers to account constructively. The accommodation has improved vastly since the last inspection but, given some of it is still in an unsatisfactory state of repair, governors and senior staff must ensure that the school continues to monitor potential health and safety issues regularly.

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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	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

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	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?	2	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	
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	
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	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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Many thanks for our warm welcome. We really enjoyed our visit to your school. We learnt a great deal from talking with you and the staff, and joining your lessons and other activities. You spoke to us articulately, confidently and openly.

We were delighted to see that you are thriving at Bishop Wordsworth's and that you are immensely proud of your school's achievements. We agree with your comments, and the views of your parents and teachers, that Bishop Wordsworth's is an outstanding school.

Your examination results are very impressive. You are taught well and you appreciate your teachers' love of their subject. You have superb opportunities to study a wide variety of subjects and pursue additional interests in the extensive programme of out-of-hours activities. The headteacher, senior team and governing body work really hard to make sure that you have the best all-round education possible - and you work hard too.

We are fascinated by your school's current debate about teaching and learning styles. The student research group is generating interesting feedback about your experiences and preferences. We hope that your debate about learning styles will be influential.

The traditions of your school are held in high respect by you, your parents and your staff, and its location is very special. Some of its buildings are very old. There has been a vast improvement in accommodation since the last inspection. Your school will make the remaining necessary improvements as speedily as possible.

We were most impressed by your exemplary behaviour and the many ways that you contribute to the school community. We hope that you continue to make outstanding progress during your time at Bishop Wordsworth's.