

Newstead Wood School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101671
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	335768
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	David Radomsky

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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	988
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo-Anne Penn
Headteacher	Elizabeth Allen
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
School address	Avebury Road Orpington Kent BR6 9SA
Telephone number	01689 853626
Fax number	01689 853315
Email address	office@newsteadwood.bromley.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. Thirty-five lessons were observed, taught by 35 teachers and meetings were held with parents, groups of students, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised policies, monitoring information, data about past and present standards and progress, the school improvement plan and the school improvement partner's notes. The team analysed the 160 parental questionnaires, 65 completed by staff and 102 by students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively students who speak English as an additional language are supported and how well they progress
- actions taken by school leaders to improve the consistency in the quality of teaching and assessment
- the degree of success of the actions that the school has taken to improve all aspects of the sixth form.

Information about the school

Newstead Wood is an average sized girls' grammar school with over a third of its students in the sixth form. Since September 2004, the school has had engineering specialist status. In 2008, it gained a second specialism in languages. In 2008, the school secured recognition from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust as a Gifted and Talented Lead School. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is well below average. Very few girls have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average with an average percentage whose first language is not English. The school has achieved many awards such as the International School Award and will be offering the International Baccalaureate from September 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school that is not complacent and continuously strives to improve further. Students excel academically and socially and develop an impressive sense of mature and thoughtful communal responsibility. As one parent put it, 'Our eldest daughter is heading off to university and we could not have asked for a better preparation from her school life.' Students show confidence and behave in a consistently thoughtful and supportive manner, contributing to an extremely positive and nurturing school ethos. Through excellent care, guidance and support systems, students feel very safe in school and are enabled to make well-informed choices about their futures. Above all, they make an outstanding contribution to their school, local and international communities, and have well-developed personal attitudes and engage positively with people of differing faiths and cultures.

The innovative curriculum offers a broad range of personal pathways so that the needs and aspirations of all students are met exceptionally well and offers students many memorable experiences. Through extensive partnership work with businesses, professionals and other agencies, as well as the many and varied in-school activities, students have opportunities to excel in a broad range of activities and develop a wide variety of skills. The recent developments in the curriculum combined with the specialist engineering, languages and gifted and talented specialisms, are a significant contributory factor in sustaining outstanding outcomes.

Through early identification and highly effective support systems, the school ensures that all students, including those who speak English as an additional language, make outstanding progress during their time at the school. Attainment in all subjects is consistently high. Students enjoy their learning and, in most lessons, teachers engage students well by framing a variety of creative learning and assessment activities that facilitate high-quality acquisition of knowledge, understanding and new skills. In a few lessons, however, teachers do not use the information they have on students' progress to plan appropriate activities with sufficient challenge for all levels of ability, the pace is too slow and marking is not helpful, thus slowing students' progress. The monitoring work by all leaders has not focused sharply enough on measuring the impact of teaching on students' learning.

The headteacher, ably assisted by senior leaders, has created a unity of purpose and has been the driving force in continuously striving for excellence. The school knows itself well and is reflective, self-critical and actively involves students in

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assessing its work. Much has been achieved, including improvements in the sixth form and, as the nature of the student population changes, provision is modified and students tracked, ensuring that all have equality of opportunity. This track record of outstanding outcomes and continuous improvement, combined with the emerging strengths in governor challenge and support, demonstrates an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that in a higher proportion of lessons, all students make consistently outstanding progress by:
 - planning lessons so that students have more opportunities to be active learners for the most part of every lesson
 - ensuring leaders at all levels focus more sharply on improving the quality of students' learning and any development points are followed up.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students enjoy their lessons a great deal. The level of commitment to their work is high; they show ambition and interest, applying themselves fully to the range of activities on offer. They take great pride in their work and have positive and mutually respectful relationships with their teachers. This is supported by their outstanding behaviour and attendance which is consistently high.

Students make outstanding progress during their time at the school. Students enter the school with high levels of attainment and by the end of Year 11 attainment is high in all subjects, with over 80% attaining the highest GCSE grades. The school correctly identified that girls who speak English as an additional language do not have the same higher order literacy skills as their peers. Early identification and prompt action has been taken to address these issues. As a result, inspectors observed that these groups were making progress at the same outstanding rate as their peers.

Girls are highly articulate, and during their time at school develop excellent presentation skills and self-confidence. With high standards in all subjects, combined with their aspirations and determination to succeed, students are well prepared for future studies, work and economic well-being.

Students of all ages have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and act responsibly in lessons and around the school. They feel exceptionally well cared for by the staff as well as by their sixth form peer listeners. The school council is well respected and represents the views of the entire school body. Students have their own leadership team, each of whom is linked to a member of the senior leadership team and a link governor. Consequently, students have a strong voice and

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are a strategic influence in the school.

Students play an important role in helping with staff appointments and contribute strongly to improving the quality of their own learning by helping to devise schemes of work and plan lessons. Inspectors observed a highly competent Year 9 religious studies lesson taught by three sixth form students. They make an excellent contribution to the school and wider communities by, for example, acting as sports leaders in local primary schools, performing in concerts and drama productions and raising considerable sums of money for a range of charities which they choose themselves. Consequently, their contribution to both the school and wider community is outstanding.

Students understand the importance of good health and the vast majority are committed to adopting healthy lifestyles. Many participate in and enjoy the range of sporting opportunities that are on offer. Students have a strong set of personal values combined with empathy, awareness and an understanding of others. They respect and value cultural diversity and gain an excellent insight into the lives, experiences and beliefs of others through first-hand experiences and their openness to new ideas.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers consistently demonstrate strong subject knowledge and infectious

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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enthusiasm which motivate and inspire students. Lessons commonly proceed at a good pace and teachers skilfully use questioning techniques to elicit understanding and build on prior knowledge. Teachers set a good pace and encourage students actively to lead their own learning and work collaboratively with their peers. Inspectors also observed some good use of self-assessment and peer assessment, supported by effective feedback from teachers. Where this was the case, students could talk confidently about their learning and understood what they needed to do to improve their work. However, the best practice is not consistently seen in lessons. Teachers sometimes talk for too long and are over directive. As a result, students who are keen to proceed with their learning at a fast pace are frustrated as they are not given sufficient opportunities to take ownership of their learning. In particular, the good assessment information that is available to teachers is not yet used sufficiently well by those teachers to plan lessons that are closely adapted to the needs of different students. Consequently, in these instances, students’ learning and progress are slower than in the more successful lessons.

The recently introduced ‘journeys of a lifetime’ is delivered through themed pathways which progress through the school from Year 7 to Year 13. These pathways develop students’ independent learning skills such as personal learning and thinking skills and risk taking and develop self-esteem, confidence and enjoyment in the students. The specialist engineering and languages status combined with the gifted and talented lead status strongly underpin the outstanding and broad choice of courses that students can choose from, including Japanese and Mandarin.

Students are also able to extend their talents, for example in sport, drama and debating, through a well-devised extra-curricular programme that includes a range of societies. Many educational visits in this country and abroad as well as visitors help students to put their learning into context.

The school provides an excellent learning environment. A strong sense of ambition is underpinned by a caring ethos. Staff have excellent knowledge of their students, who are known to all as individuals. There are strong links with primary schools and the arrangements for transfer from Year 6 to Year 7 are well developed. Sound advice is offered to students when choosing their Key Stage 4 and sixth form options.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

The school continues to benefit from the exceptional and inspirational leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff. Along with governors, leaders communicate a shared vision that is highly ambitious, aspiring for excellence in achievement, care and personal development for every student. Staff morale is high and all are proud to be members of this school community which willingly shares its research and expertise with local schools and national educational organisations.

Leaders monitor the work of the school well and the senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning as do the majority of subject leaders. Some middle leaders, however, do not have a sharp enough understanding of how to measure accurately the impact of teaching on students’ learning. As a result, they do not develop their team’s teaching expertise sufficiently well to ensure that all students are consistently making outstanding progress.

Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school’s work and hence all achieve outstanding outcomes. The school systematically breaks down stereotypical views by, for example, choosing the specialism of engineering for a girls’ school. The school has good links with parents and carers, but recognises that more needs to be done to seek their views and involve them more directly in their children’s learning.

The school has extremely strong partnerships with a wide range of local schools, colleges, businesses, universities and the community. Its work was highly commended in a Specialist Schools and Academies Trust’s Chief Executive’s award for service to the community of schools. The school’s commitment to community cohesion is exemplary. As a result, students have a strong understanding of the diversity of religious, ethnic and cultural groups locally, nationally and internationally.

The governing body has successfully emerged from a period of turbulence and, with the recruitment of some new governors, comprises a broad range of expertise and the determination to maintain and build on the school’s outstanding reputation. Through their role as link governors, they have become increasingly active in collaborating with school and student leaders; they closely monitor the work of the school, and have the capacity to influence the school’s future strategic direction. Clear policies and procedures for safeguarding are enacted thoroughly and monitored so that young people are kept safe at all times.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and

1

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driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students in the sixth form succeed exceptionally well in their studies and personal development. Attainment is high and their progress is outstanding. All students hold positions of responsibility, for example as members of the student leadership team, teaching and mentoring younger students and organising clubs and societies. Additionally, they organise activities in local primary schools, taking part in national events and competitions and raising impressive sums of money for a range of charities.

Students are extremely appreciative of their teachers: they say they are passionate about wanting them to succeed and give them detailed and extremely helpful advice about what they need to do to reach the challenging targets they have set for themselves. The school has continued to develop the curriculum since the last inspection by introducing a Diploma course and is working with another school to widen further the options it provides. The excellent match that the curriculum provides to students’ interests, abilities and aspirations is confirmed by the high retention rates both into and within the sixth form. Enrichment and extra-curricular activities, many of which students organise themselves, enhance their learning and development. Students are also highly appreciative of the personal support they receive from their teachers and tutors.

School leaders have successfully addressed the areas for development identified by the last inspection. Sixth form leaders are highly knowledgeable about the specific features of post-compulsory education and are passionate about further developing the provision. They have strengthened the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by involving students closely in the process.

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Students develop into confident and articulate young women with a strong sense of responsibility for others. They develop a variety of skills, including leadership, team work and problem solving, which together with their academic attainment, stand them in very good stead for their future learning and employment.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Of the low proportion of parents and carers who responded to the inspection survey, a very large majority was extremely positive in their support for the school and several praised staff for their excellent teaching and care. A very small minority felt that the school could do more to keep them informed about the progress that their children were making and could do more to help them support that learning. Inspectors agreed that more could be done. A very small minority of parents wrote that girls' behaviour occasionally interrupts learning. Inspectors consistently saw behaviour in lessons and around the school which was exemplary.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Newstead Wood School for Girls to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 160 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 988 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	86	54	70	44	2	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	76	48	75	47	5	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	44	27	95	59	15	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	47	71	44	6	4	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	68	42	76	48	8	5	2	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	40	25	81	51	27	17	5	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	26	98	61	10	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	60	38	76	47	4	2	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	67	42	72	45	7	4	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	27	71	44	21	13	6	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	21	78	49	20	12	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	73	46	73	46	4	2	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	97	61	50	31	6	4	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



31 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Newstead Wood School for Girls, Orpington, BR6 9SA

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave us when we visited Newstead Wood School for Girls. We greatly enjoyed talking to many of you and wish we had had more time to meet all of you. Yours is an outstanding school and these are some of the reasons why.

- Your headteacher, staff and governors are passionate in wanting to help you achieve excellence in all that you do.
- The curriculum and extended opportunities that the school provides for you ensure that you have the widest possible choices that give you exceptionally good and enjoyable learning opportunities.
- You willingly take on a broad range of responsibilities in the school and in the community. Your charitable work is extensive and you have a real sense of what it means to be upright and responsible citizens.
- Most teachers prepare high quality lessons, agree challenging targets with you and work with you to make your learning exciting. You confirmed that they give you helpful feedback to enable you to make outstanding progress.
- You are given many opportunities to take responsibility for your own learning and behaviour.
- You agreed that you are very well cared for and supported.
- You are confident, self-assured, and you appreciate and celebrate difference so that everyone feels part of the Newstead 'family'.

Even outstanding schools have things that could be better. We have asked the school to ensure that you have more time for active learning so that in even more lessons you can make outstanding progress. You can contribute to this by engaging positively in all activities and group work that your teachers set you, and don't be shy to debate and challenge each other's points of view.

We wish you every success and happiness in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Radomsky
Lead inspector

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