

SUMMARY OF THE INSPECTION REPORT WESTCLIFF HIGH SCHOOL

A grammar school situated in Westcliff-on-Sea inspected on 19th - 22nd January 2004 by an inspection team led by Mrs C Worthington.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school which has many outstanding features including very high standards in academic work. Girls achieve very well because of the very good and often excellent teaching they receive and their own high aspirations, engendered by the school's ethos in which excellence in all areas is valued. Leadership and management of the school are very good. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the future development of the school in its newly acquired specialist status and is very well supported by his senior managers. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- very good teaching and learning, with outstanding practice in mathematics, art, and religious studies;
- a very good, wide and varied curriculum which meets the needs of all girls very well;
- girls' excellent attitudes to learning and behaviour;
- a very good sixth form;
- very good provision for the gifted and talented;
- its excellent work as a Beacon School;
- very good pastoral care and guidance;
- unsatisfactory accommodation for English; and
- limited access to information and communication technology (ICT) facilities for cross-curricular work.

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. All the key issues have been addressed and statutory requirements met. There has been particularly good improvement in provision for religious studies and ICT. High standards have been maintained and the school sets and meets higher targets each year. Teaching has improved from good to very good and leadership and management remain very good. The school is very well placed to make further improvements, particularly in its newly acquired specialist status.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A*	A*	A*	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A*	A*	n/a	

Key: A - very high; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.*

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

The school's performance in external examinations is outstanding. Girls enter the school with above average capability and are regularly leaving with standards in the top five per cent of the country (A*). Girls achieve very well in Years 7 to 9 and achieve a similarly high standard in their Year 9 National Curriculum tests. Nevertheless, they still manage to improve at an above average rate between Years 9 and 11 compared with similar schools.

In the sixth form, standards are again in the top five per cent in the country for A and AS level; achievement is also very good overall despite many students starting afresh with subjects that they have not studied at GCSE.

Work seen during the inspection was well above average throughout the school, with particularly high standards seen in religious studies in every year, history, design and technology, music and physical education in Years 10 and 11 and art in the sixth form. Slightly lower standards were seen in music and German in Years 7 to 9, but standards improve as girls go through the school. There is every indication that girls' examination performance will reach similar high levels in the current year.

Girls' **personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** are **very good**. Their moral and social development, in particular, is excellent. Their **attendance** is **very good** and their **attitudes** and **behaviour outstanding**. Punctuality is good but some girls occasionally arrive late in the morning because of problems with school buses. Lessons start on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education provided by the school** is very good. Girls benefit from very good **teaching** with some excellent, particularly in religious studies, mathematics, ICT, English and art. The highest proportion of excellent teaching was seen in the sixth form. Particular strengths are in the expertise of teachers and their very high expectations of their pupils, who learn very well because of this and their outstanding capacity for study. The school provides a very good broad and balanced curriculum relevant to the needs of the school's pupils, who also benefit from the many opportunities provided to enrich the taught curriculum. The school provides very good pastoral care; it supports and guides girls very well in all aspects of school life so that all are given every opportunity to succeed. The school enjoys good partnerships with parents and has very good links with other schools and the community through its being a DRB (a designated recommending body) and a Beacon School and one that enjoys specialist status.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. Senior staff and academic and pastoral managers are very effective and this contributes to the school's success. The previous headteacher led the school through very good improvement since the last inspection and the smooth transfer of leadership to the new headteacher has ensured that the school is now poised to succeed in its new role as a Science and Engineering College. **Governance** is good; governors continue to be very supportive of the school. They are highly involved with the school's development planning and monitor the finances very effectively.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire and attended the parents' meeting were overwhelmingly positive about the school. A few thought that their daughters were given too much homework. Inspectors found that homework extends the curriculum well and that, if planned, is not excessive for a grammar school. Reports, however, frequently do not clearly indicate girls' strengths and weaknesses and how improvements could be made. Girls themselves are also completely positive about the school; it fulfils their desire to learn and do well in a friendly and very supportive community.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Provide suitable accommodation for English and other subjects, which have to use the present unsatisfactory de-mountable huts;
- improve subject access to ICT facilities for all by overcoming timetable and resources constraints;

and to meet statutory requirements:

- the governors must include examination results in their reports to parents and give more information on special educational needs.

THE SIXTH FORM AT WESTCLIFF HIGH SCHOOL

The sixth form caters for 273 students and provides a wide range of academic courses.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is very effective; it provides an outstandingly good standard of education for its students. Teaching is very good and very often excellent.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teachers have a very high level of expertise and expect all students to achieve their best.
- Gifted and talented students do very well and use their talents to help younger girls.
- Sixth-formers take responsibility for leading many activities in the school.
- Students are prepared very well for higher education and careers, but initial induction to the sixth form could be developed further.
- Sixth-formers have excellent attitudes to their work and are determined to succeed.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Very good. Teaching and learning result in very high standards and very good achievement in English. In French, written language is better than the spoken.
Mathematics	Very good. Students achieve success through very good teaching and their own eagerness to learn and succeed.
Science	Very good provision for chemistry and biology ensures all round success. Physics was not inspected.
Information and communication technology	Very Good. Attainment in ICT is well above the national average. Teaching is very good. Students' achievement is very good.
Humanities	Provision for religious studies is excellent. The standard of students' work is exceptionally high; teaching, learning and achievement are all excellent. Provision and standards in history and geography are very good with highly qualified and experienced teachers who guide students very well. Psychology was not inspected.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Good provision in design and technology. Standards achieved are well above average and improving.
Visual and performing arts and media	Very good standards in art, with excellent leadership and teaching that ensures that students do very well.
General education	Government and politics have very good standards and achievement which are the result of high quality teaching, very positive student attitudes and very good leadership of the subject.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive very good academic and pastoral support which enables them to achieve very high standards and fulfil their potential.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are very good; the sixth form is very cost effective. The respective heads of Year 12 and Year 13 bring different strengths to the leadership team which is led by the very able head of sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

They have positive views about the school. They believe it satisfies their needs and prepares them well for their futures.

A copy of the full inspection report, which includes all the main judgements and grades, can be obtained from the school. Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet 'Complaining about Ofsted inspections', which is available from the school or Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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