

The Grey Coat Hospital

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101151
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	323414
Inspection dates	5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Gill Close (HMI)

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

Type of School	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School (total)	1043
Sixth form	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lady S Laws
Headteacher	Mrs R Allard
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2005
School address	Greycoat Place London SW1P 2DY
Telephone number	020 7969 1998
Fax number	020 7828 2697

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards in the sixth form; development of information and communication technology (ICT) capability, vocational skills and citizenship within the curriculum; how the school ensures quality of teaching, tracking, intervention and evaluation with relatively high staff turnover; behaviour and exclusions. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with leaders, teachers and students, discussion with the chair of governors, a large number of parental questionnaires, analysis of performance data and evaluation of a range of documents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The Grey Coat Hospital was established as a school in 1698. It is a Church of England school. Its intake is diverse with two thirds of students from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, of which the largest are groups with Black African or Black Caribbean heritage. One third of students speak a first language other than English but very few are at an early stage of learning English. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, with an average proportion eligible for free school meals. They join from a large number of primary schools and many travel long distances. In the last few years increasing numbers have come from the local community and from different faiths. A fewer-than-average number of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with the main ones being dyslexia, language and communication, physical, and behavioural, emotional and social. The intake is comprehensive but attainment on entry is above average. In recent years staff turnover has been high.

The school became a specialist language college in 2002 and a specialist training school in 2008. It holds a number of prestigious awards and provides extended services including community language classes. The sixth form is part of the 6f Partnership, a consortium of Westminster schools and colleges, and admits both male and female students.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Grey Coat Hospital is an outstanding school. It successfully brings together students from a range of backgrounds and enables them to make good progress to reach exceptionally high standards at GCSE. The excellent care, guidance and support within a strong Christian ethos underpin students' outstanding personal development and well-being. Parents express an extremely high level of support for the school. Typical of their views are the comments, 'The school gives our daughter a rounded, interesting and creative academic environment in which to grow and develop' and 'The school is very well-balanced, caring and positive, which develops my girl's confidence, independence and self-esteem.'

Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that achievement is good and standards are exceptionally high. In 2008 standards were exceptionally high overall and in English, mathematics and science. Five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics were achieved by 80% of students. One third of grades in all subjects were A* or A, and four fifths were at least C. Three quarters of students attained at least grade C in a modern foreign language, which far exceeds the national average, and many achieved well in two languages. Students attained standards above national average in all subjects except ICT; the school has taken appropriate steps that have successfully ensured that students currently attending the school are doing better. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities reached standards at least similar to all students nationally; they made outstanding progress. Students from White British, Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds all reached similar high standards. In 2008 students made good progress overall between Key Stages 2 and 4, and outstanding progress in mathematics. Students made good progress at Key Stage 3 in 2007. They reached exceptionally high standards in English and mathematics and above-average standards in science. Unvalidated data for the 2008 Key Stage 3 tests show that higher standards were attained.

The good quality of teaching is a key factor in the students' good progress. The school evaluates teaching and learning as good; inspectors agree with this. A substantial proportion of teaching is good or outstanding while some is satisfactory. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and examination requirements. They set high expectations and plan well. Their use of ICT and a range of activities makes lessons interesting. Teachers know their students well and build good relationships with them. In response, students work hard, collaborate with each other well, make good presentations to the class and enjoy their lessons. They find that teachers' good assessment of their work helps them to improve. A few parents have expressed concern about the impact of staff turnover on the quality of teaching for certain of their daughters' lessons. The school has effective systems in place to support new teachers and raise teaching quality, but there remains some inconsistency that contributes to variations in students' progress. Sometimes, students spend too long listening to the teacher and do not express their own views, or the work does not challenge everyone. In some lessons the teacher does not monitor progress closely enough to identify where students are stuck or focus enough on developing and checking their understanding of the processes they are carrying out.

The school judges that students' personal development and well-being are outstanding, as is the quality of care, guidance and support that it provides. Inspectors agree. The exceptional care, guidance and support provided by the staff, who know the students very well, is key to the excellent personal development and well-being of the students. The outstanding curriculum ensures students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are very enthusiastic about the school and enjoy it. Their level of attendance is excellent. Parents comment on their daughters' pride and enjoyment in belonging to the school. They give examples of them blossoming and developing responsibility after joining the school. They also praise the high quality of support for transition into Year 7 that helps their daughters settle in. The excellent support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to make outstanding progress. Reflecting the work of the school to achieve national awards for Healthy School and sports, students have an extremely good understanding of fitness and how to adopt healthy lifestyles. They welcome the improved school lunches, although space limits their availability in the upper school.

Students feel very safe and turn to peer counsellors or teachers if they have a problem. The vast majority of parents agree that their child is well cared for and some comment on the excellent relationship their child has with their form tutor. Nevertheless, there are a few instances when parents consider that their child has not been able to express their views or concerns effectively. The school recognises this and has the development of student voice as one of its current priorities. Students get on very well with each other. They make an outstanding contribution to the community of the school and beyond through charity work, positions of responsibility, sports leadership and the Duke of

Award scheme. The school operates a strict discipline policy that underpins the high standard of behaviour in lessons and has contributed to improvement. Through an increased number of short exclusions for behaviour in and around the school, it has successfully established a very orderly atmosphere. Although there are a few parents who consider that punishment has been harsh on some occasions, students find the discipline system effective in promoting an environment in which they can all learn well.

The curriculum is outstanding. It provides a very broad range of academic subjects, including Mandarin, that meets students' needs particularly well. A successful BTEC course in sport prepares students well for the Level 3 course in the sixth form. The high quality of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make outstanding progress. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in provision for citizenship, including the certificated course in Year 10, and the school plans further changes. Students develop their ICT skills well during Key Stage 3 where they reach high standards, but curriculum provision does not build on this consistently enough in Key Stage 4. Students' high standards in English, mathematics and languages, and the effective provision for work-related learning within the curriculum, prepare them exceptionally well for their future economic well-being. Students take part in an extremely wide range of enrichment activities within the curriculum and outside it. These contribute substantially to their good academic progress, their excellent personal development and awards such as Sportsmark which reflect their sporting successes. The school's language specialism has successfully developed its international ethos, recognised by the International School Award, and the many overseas links and exchanges that give the students greater understanding of different cultures. The school recognises that some overseas trips have been expensive and plans improvements in this respect.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders convey a shared vision for raising standards that permeates the school. Incisive evaluation has led to correct identification of strengths and weaknesses, which then fed into planning that has secured improvement. This demonstrates an excellent capacity to continue to improve. Since the last inspection, the apt focus on mathematics has raised standards and progress considerably at Key Stage 4. This has enabled the percentage of students achieving at least five GCSE grades A*-C including English and mathematics to rise substantially. Following a drop in sixth form performance in 2008, measures have been put in place that are already leading to notable increases in students' progress. The school has plans to ensure that refinements are made to the Key Stage 4 ICT curriculum to ensure it fully meets statutory requirements and builds successfully on the strengths at Key Stage 3. Monitoring of teaching astutely pinpoints important areas for development and contributes to improvements, and is well supported by advanced skills teachers and external consultants. The school sets challenging targets for each student and rigorously tracks their progress against them three times a year throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. Through careful planning and a wide range of activities, it makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion within the school's diverse population, locally and beyond. Governors know the school well and contribute strongly to its success, although there is room for greater challenge. While the majority of parents agree that their views are taken into account, some comment that they would like more information and greater opportunity for their views to be followed up.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. The excellent care, curriculum and leadership and management provide an exceptional environment in which students make outstanding personal development and achieve well. Following the 2007 results, in which students made outstanding progress to reach exceptionally high standards, there was a drop in performance in 2008, to which staffing difficulties made a contribution. Progress remained strongest at A level, where it was good and standards were above average. Leaders have evaluated very effectively the subject areas and causes for the dip at both A level and AS level, and have taken steps that are already leading to marked improvement. For example, the school has rightly increased the rigour of its sixth form monitoring and intervention, which is based on careful tracking of attainment. Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation, and a recent external review, that teaching in the sixth form is currently good. It is consistent with the students making good progress. In a number of subject areas where teaching is outstanding, students make excellent progress. Nevertheless, there remains some inconsistency in the progress students currently make, so overall progress is good. Care, guidance and support are outstanding; they make a significant contribution to the high

proportion of students who move on to university. Students praise the support from teachers and tutors. Students' personal development and well-being are excellent. Sixth-formers thoroughly enjoy the school. They provide very good role models for younger pupils and help them out in a number of ways, such as through peer mentoring, reading partnerships and running clubs. Prefects contribute substantially to the school's activities and the head girl attends governors' meetings. Through the sixth form partnership, students have access to a wide range of courses and there is an exceptional breadth of enrichment activities with high take-up. Following changes in staffing and leadership structure last year, which are now embedded, outstanding leadership and management have ensured effective evaluation and more efficient systems that give the sixth form outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve consistency in teaching to challenge and involve all students, and monitor how well they understand.
- Ensure statutory requirements for ICT are fully met at Key Stage 4.