

The Henrietta Barnett School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101354
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	307664
Inspection date	4 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	708
6th form	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stuart Lester
Headteacher	Mr Oliver Blond
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Central Square Hampstead Garden Suburb London NW11 7BN
Telephone number	020 8458 8999
Fax number	020 8455 8900

Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How effectively are leaders at all levels ensuring that pupils make maximum progress?
- What are leaders and managers doing to ensure maximum impact of the school's specialist status?
- What impact does teaching have on achievement and the progress pupils make?

Evidence was gathered from the analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with learners and discussions with teachers and senior staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspector 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 school is a smaller than average all girls grammar school. Almost three quarters of its pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of girls whose first language is believed not to be English is over half. The percentage of pupils with learning needs or disabilities is very low as is the proportion eligible for free school meals. The school has recently acquired music specialist status. The headteacher has been in post since April 2006 and there is a new deputy headteacher since September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'Henrietta Barnett is a brilliant school, we do not have a single bad word to say about it.' Both the inspectors and the vast majority of parents agree with the words of this parent. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and, as a result, the school provides an excellent education for its girls. They reach extremely high standards in the national tests in Year 9. In 2007, almost all of them gained the highest levels in English, mathematics and science. This pattern of attainment continues at GCSE, where 88% of grades were at A or A*, and at A level where 70% were at grade A. Girls reach particularly high levels of attainment in mathematics, English literature and classical studies at GCSE and across a wide range of subjects at A level. Despite these exceptional results, the school does not rest on its laurels and continually seeks to improve. It analyses data extremely effectively in order to target small areas of relatively weaker performance. It then puts excellent support in place to raise the achievement of girls who need it.

Girls make excellent progress during their time at the school because of the outstanding teaching they receive. What makes the teaching so exceptional? Teachers are particularly adept at using electronic whiteboards to engage the girls in their learning. They also provide many opportunities for girls to discuss their ideas with each other in pairs and groups. Because of this focus on speaking and listening, girls make excellent progress, particularly those whose first language is not English. In a Year 7 English lesson, girls discussed how they would feel about being placed in particular environments. The excellent questioning skills of the teacher enabled them to put themselves successfully in the position of the character Willie when studying 'Goodnight Mr Tom'. In a science lesson, the teacher enabled girls to make hypotheses through simple, but highly effective visual aids and by probing understanding by asking challenging questions. Peer assessment makes a considerable impact on progress. For example, in art and design, girls reflected on their own and each other's work and set targets for improvement. This resulted in them knowing clearly what to do to reach higher standards in their work. Excellent cross-curricular links are apparent in many lessons. In an outstanding geography lesson girls learnt about the inner city and urban regeneration. Discussions not only focused on geography but on history, economics and moral and social attitudes. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used extremely well to support learning in different subjects. In an excellent mathematics lesson, girls used graphing programmes on laptops. This enabled them to work quickly on tasks set and to compare their answers to a number of different questions. Meticulous planning and clear lesson objectives feature consistently in teachers' lesson plans. They prepare extremely well for the varying needs of the girls in their classes. It is clear to see why standards are so high and pupils achieve so very well.

The excellent personal development of the girls also makes a big impact on their achievement. Behaviour and attitudes are impeccable. This is because they are very happy in school and thoroughly enjoy themselves. Girls speak very positively about the headteacher and how, 'he makes a real effort to talk to us about our work' and, 'we feel important and special'. Another factor is that girls say 'everyone here wants to learn'. This is because 'we have fun in a lot of our lessons'. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding and is promoted successfully through the high expectations that permeate the work of the school. Girls are involved in decision making as much as possible and three student governors attend governing body meetings to make the voices of the girls heard. This works very well and they report that 'the school listens to us'. They were involved closely with the interviewing of the

latest headteacher. Girls adopt healthy lifestyles. They have campaigned for an improvement in school lunches and have appreciated the changes in meals. One said, 'I look at the ingredients on the crisps before I eat them now!' Girls feel safe and secure in school, and talk about the welcoming, community atmosphere. There is much activity in the local community and the girls reach out to those in need. They have raised funds for various charities and have been involved in community music projects. There has been a chamber music competition at a local old people's home and girls have presented drama to primary school learners. Recently, links have been set up between some Year 7 girls and learners with special needs at a local special school, which has been mutually beneficial. Preparation for life after school is thorough and the school works well with local businesses through work experience in this country and abroad, and with the careers advice service.

Why is personal development so good? The key is the exemplary care, guidance and support provided for the girls. In the words of a parent, 'The teachers really care for each pupil and are concerned for their individual progress.' Assessment and academic guidance are exemplary. Girls understand and know exactly what their personal and subject targets are and how to achieve them. They spoke to the inspector about how these are regularly reviewed, and re-set if necessary. It is clear to the girls what improvements they need to make because 'teachers share their criteria for the achievement of targets'. Girls say that their work is marked frequently and that they receive both written and verbal feedback about their work. This was substantiated by the inspector during visits to lessons. Comments in exercise books are often directed towards meeting the next grade or level and, quite rightly, girls say 'There is always something constructive written in books, even if we get everything right, not just the word good.'

Because of the excellent curriculum offered by the school, girls benefit from a wide range of subjects, extra-curricular clubs, educational visits and enrichment activities. This situation has improved particularly over the last eighteen months. A number of workshops are run during the year where the girls are able to explore particular themes. Girls spoke enthusiastically about science week, and history and poetry workshops. Visitors and visits to various places of interest also enhance the curriculum. Extra-curricular activities are now varied and some are unusual such as fencing, yoga and hip hop dancing. The school has imminent plans to launch a series of new clubs specifically for Years 7 to 9. Personal, social and health education is successfully taught and the girls spoke excitedly about what they had learned. They were particularly keen on plans to introduce virtual babies. Girls have also participated in the 'Maths Challenge' and gained medals and certificates.

The school's recently acquired specialist status in music has not yet had time to make a full impact on the curriculum. There are clear plans and targets in place, which the school still needs to implement and monitor.

Why is the school so successful? It is because of outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher and his deputies are a highly talented team of individuals who manage change very effectively. They have transmitted a clear and simple vision to all members of the school community. Their excellent teamwork is infectious and middle managers also do an impressive job. Senior and middle leaders work together to monitor and evaluate how well the school is doing. School self-evaluation at all levels of management is accurate and highly effective. All teachers are also seen as leaders in their own classrooms. Leaders listen carefully to parents and the girls themselves. They have taken action to respond to identified concerns raised by questionnaires. Governors play an integral part in school life, challenging and supporting leaders and always require explanations that satisfy their questions. Parents are overwhelmingly

supportive of the school and praise its work highly. The school has made excellent progress since the last inspection and has excellent capacity to continue in this vein.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

About one third of the girls in the sixth form join from other schools. There are good induction procedures that mean they settle quickly. Equally important, there is a very welcoming ethos and they are made to feel that they are amongst friends. This is indicative of the excellent relationships and very strong sense of community that pervades sixth form life. Expectations of both staff and students are high and are met. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is well above average. Girls are eager to learn and have very positive attitudes. They receive good and sometimes outstanding teaching. What raises teaching and learning to be outstanding overall is the excellent contribution that the girls themselves make in class. They learn from one another as well as from the teacher and through their own independent study. For instance, in an English lesson the focus was on the way in which females were perceived in a standard text. Astute questioning by the teacher helped to develop the girls' understanding. This was further enhanced by an electric, stimulating discussion in which the girls drew on their reading outside the prescribed texts and supported their arguments superbly with well-chosen references. Consequently, most girls make excellent progress. A few do not reach this exceptional level in Year 12, but the thorough tracking by the school means that they are identified, supported, and challenged so their progress is accelerated. By the end of Year 13, results at A level are exceptionally high.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the specialist school plan and carefully monitor its impact in all areas of the school's work.

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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?	1	1
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

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	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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	1	
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

14 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Henrietta Barnett School, London, NW11 7BN

Thank you for taking part in the recent inspection of your school by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. May I say what a delightful day we had. We found you to be mature, polite, sensible and extremely helpful.

Your school really is an outstanding place to be and it is great to see that you are very proud of this. You enjoy attending and you achieve high standards because of the excellent teaching you receive. Teaching is excellent in your school because teachers are committed to your success and they are very good at their job. Another reason for your achievement is that you are extremely well cared for and all members of the school community have your personal development at heart. We were particularly impressed by the way you take on responsibility and are confident in your own abilities without being immodest. This is a very good personal quality to have and is highly commendable. You told us how much you value the leadership of the headteacher and his team. We agree with you and judge his leadership and management to be outstanding.

Many of you take part in extra activities organised by the school and thoroughly enjoy them. These include trips and participation in events such as poetry workshops. You have many opportunities to learn musical instruments and to participate in various musical activities. Many of you take part in sport and are members of school teams.

Even in an outstanding school like yours, there is always something to be done. We have asked your school to ensure that the music specialist status plans be fully put into place and the benefits be monitored.

I wish you every success at Henrietta Barnett.

Kind Regards

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector